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Nuclear Iran or nuking Iran?

Harry der Nederlanden

Reports that the U.S. military has been gearing up to launch preemptive strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities have dominated news magazines and political commentary in April. Not long after his election as President of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad replaced North Korea's Kim Jong-il as the "scariest man on earth" (*MacLean's* cover story) by denying the holocaust, committing to the annihilation of Israel and setting his country on the road to become a nuclear power. Although the U.S. and Europe have seldom been on the same page in their Middle East policy, they are agreed that they do not want to see nuclear weapons in the hands of this fanatic.



Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

In a recent issue of the *New Yorker*, however, a long article by Seymour Hersh described in considerable detail the military options U.S. planners and generals are considering. Some of the scenarios are just as scary as the prospect of a nuclear Iran—perhaps more so. Hersh, a respected journalist, wrote:

The Bush Administration, while publicly advocating diplomacy in order to stop Iran from pursuing a nuclear weapon, has increased clandestine activities inside Iran and intensified planning for a possible major air attack. Current and former American military and intelligence officials said that Air Force planning groups are drawing up lists of targets, and teams of American combat troops have been ordered into Iran, under cover, to collect targeting data and to establish contact with anti-government ethnic-minority groups.

He quotes unnamed insiders who declare that the Bush administration is determined to do anything, including dropping

nuclear bunker-buster bombs, to prevent Iran from developing its nuclear capability. In fact, some are convinced that once again the administration has its sights on forcing a regime change in Iran as it did in Iraq. Hersh says that many generals are strongly opposed to a strike against Iran, and especially the use of nuclear weapons, but that they are being ignored.

According to Hersh, U.S. carrier-based aircraft in the Persian Gulf are already simulating bombing runs on Iran. And President Bush has restated his doctrine of preemptive strikes and preventive war in the new National Security Strategy.

The use of nuclear bunker-buster bombs is part of the scenario because Iran's largest facility for the development of enriched uranium is located underground, some 75 feet underground, where conventional bombs cannot penetrate.

Failed negotiations

Even before the election of

Ahmadinejad, Iran had been sparring with the European Union and with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on the matter of inspections in accordance with the treaty for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Recently Iran admitted that it has been secretly violating that treaty for years, but it keeps insisting that its enrichment is only for peaceful purposes. Very few experts are willing to believe Iran on this score.

In its protracted negotiations with Iran, in which the latter repeatedly pretended to come to the point of agreement only to push the envelope a bit farther, the EU has made several proposals that would have given Iran access to nuclear energy without the technology for producing weapons grade uranium. Ahmadinejad has made it quite clear that he will stop at nothing short of a complete nuclear program, and in mid-April he announced triumphantly that his scientists had successfully

produced enriched uranium.

Estimates vary widely, but some say Iran could have a nuclear bomb within three years. As it quickly multiplies the number of centrifuges dedicated to the enrichment of uranium, that process could be speeded up well beyond what it is now. Defying a U.N. order to freeze enrichment by April 28, Iran instead announced its determination to have 3,000 interconnected uranium centrifuges working full-time to produce nuclear fuel by the end of this year. This could give Iran nuclear capability within a year, and it already possesses missiles that could deliver nuclear warheads to parts of Europe. It could certainly deliver on its threat to annihilate Israel.

Why the hysteria?

Why is it so crucial that Iran be prevented from getting the bomb? After all, countries like India and Pakistan have become part of the nuclear club, and the U.S. has never contemplated bombing their nuclear facilities. What makes a nuclear Iran more dangerous?

There are some experts, of course, who argue that the U.S. is becoming needlessly freaked out about Iran. Barry Posen represents a group of theorists (realists) who believe that the function of nuclear weapons is to serve as a deterrent, that is, to keep other countries from attacking. After the U.S. invasion of Iraq, there is little doubt that Iranians want nuclear weapons to keep the same thing from happening to them.

Other commentators consider the idea that the possession of nuclear weapons will make Iran more responsible and more stable to be foolish optimism. In fact, they seem to be in the majority. In the past, they point out, Iran has

actually been more aggressive over toward the West than the Saddam regime ever was. Iran served as the base for terrorist attacks against U.S. soldiers stationed in the Middle East on several occasions; it has provided a safe haven for militant Islamists; and there is evidence aplenty that it has been providing arms to Shiite militias in Iraq.

Yet, even those in favor of air strikes against Iran do not believe that Ahmadinejad intends to launch a nuclear attack against Europe or even against Israel. They fear, however, that under the cover of its nuclear capability it will be emboldened to other sorts of mischief, such as supplying the weapons to terrorists, bullying its neighbors to cooperate with its anti-Western policies, or serving as a base for outright aggression with conventional weapons, using its nuclear weapons as a deterrent against counter-attacks. In other words, having nuclear weapons as a back-up would not make Iran more responsible but more volatile, more prone to adventurism.

At the very least, as an article in the issue of *The National Interest* devoted to the Iran issue points out, a nuclear Iran "would greatly undercut the goals of modernism and democracy which the U.S. has been promoting in the Islamic world." In other words, the dream of transforming that part of the world will have received another setback (if, indeed, it is still alive).

Apocalyptic scenarios

It may well be that Hersh's article is largely journalistic hype and wild speculation, as the Bush administration has charged, for the military routinely plays out possible scenarios that are not

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News

New militia is potent force in Nigeria's oil-rich delta region

A well-organized rebel group has emerged to shut off more than one-fifth of Nigeria's oil output.



Daniel Balint Kurti

WARRI, NIGERIA — Gunmen dressed in black balaclavas and camouflage flak jackets approach in a boat. As it draws alongside, their voices can be heard singing. The chorus fades and they introduce themselves.

"We are the security men of the Niger delta," says one of the men in the blue speedboat bristling with assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenade launchers. "Nobody is going to hurt you. We are everywhere in the Niger delta."

The singing militiamen are part of the newly organized Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and are the latest expression of local resentment in a region of the country where tens of

millions of dollars worth of oil are extracted each day, but most people live on only several hundred dollars each year.

The MEND organization, whose leadership remains a matter of speculation, appears to be better organized, trained, and equipped than any other group to emerge so far from this restive, swampy region.

"The way [the MEND militiamen] have been able to engage [the Nigerian military] in the last one month or so, the sophistication of firepower, it's not child's play," says Kayode Komolafe, managing editor of Nigeria's *This Day* newspaper. "What we have in this place is something aching. If we are not careful it could explode into greater warfare."

Nigeria is the world's eighth largest oil exporter, and MEND's recent sabotage of pipelines and other oil facilities has so far shut off over a fifth of the country's oil output, steadily driving up world oil prices.

MEND recently threatened more attacks and vowed to cut daily oil exports by one million barrels, adding to concerns for Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). MEND recently captured, and subsequently released, several hostages from the US, Egypt, the Philippines, and Thailand, but is still holding two Americans and a Briton. MEND has killed at least 14 soldiers in gun battles.

At a meeting with journalists in the middle of the Escravos River, a MEND gunman swore to "stop oil flowing from our land" until a host of political and economic grievances were resolved.

High up on the list of demands was the release of two ethnic Ijaw leaders: secessionist militia boss Mujahid Dokubo-Asari, who was arrested in September on treason charges, and Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, a former southern governor who jumped bail in Britain on money laundering charges and was jailed soon after arriving back in Nigeria.

MEND is also demanding that Royal Dutch Shell, which produces close to half Nigeria's oil, pay the Ijaws \$1.5 billion in environmental

compensation (as demanded by the country's legislature) and that the delta be given greater control over oil revenues.

At present, 13 percent of Nigerian oil revenues flow back to regional state governments, which are renowned for corruption. Delta politicians and militants are demanding that, at a minimum, the region receive 50 percent.

Abel Oshevire, spokesman for the regional Delta state government, says constitutional amendments allocating greater control of the region's resources to local authorities are needed. "We are working seriously at this and we should be able to achieve our desire."

Observers are taking MEND seriously. The militiamen boast of an arsenal including heavy M-16 guns and more serious weaponry than any other Nigerian militias to date. Their 400-horsepower boats are faster than Nigerian Navy craft.

For now, authorities say they don't know where the arms are coming from, but observers suspect that they are purchased with the proceeds of a lucrative trade in stolen oil, known in Nigeria as "bunkering."

A source close to the government points to the group's discipline and professional bearing as signs that its members have probably undergone months of serious training by experienced soldiers or former soldiers. Mr. Gbomo says the militia includes "dismissed, retired, and

serving military personnel."

This militia's actions are also different from other similar groups in the region. Before MEND, kidnappings of foreigners had not been carried out to push for national political reforms, but rather were a means of extracting ransom payments or forcing oil companies to help a given local community.

President Olusegun Obasanjo insists that he is doing what he can for the delta's development, including setting up a development agency for the region. Locals say the agency's projects, which include road-building and a computer-training center, don't make a real difference.

On April 19 MEND denounced plans unfolded by President Olusegun Obasanjo to create 20,000 jobs in the region and invest in roads, education and health for its people. "For 50 years the wealth of our people has been looted by the Nigerian government and it believes this injustice can be remedied by providing menial jobs to indigenes of the Niger Delta," MEND said in a statement emailed to reporters.

Demieari Von Kemedi, a human rights campaigner in the oil city of Port Harcourt, says Mr. Obasanjo's strategy is to "create the impression that he is not too worried about the issues and, secondly, that the issue may not be as important as people represent it to be."

Iran ...continued from p. 1

seriously contemplated (such as the scenario for a U.S. invasion of Quebec that recently surfaced). But in some quarters a nuclear strike on Iran is more acceptable than an Iran armed with nuclear missiles capable of hitting the cities of Europe. It does not take a lot of stretching to "demonize" Ahmadinejad. *The New Republic* mocked such demonizing by depicting him on its cover with the fangs of Dracula, but the accompanying article paints the picture of a zealot who believes in an ascetic, militant Islam and who has already sent Iranian youths to martyrdom.

Already in September of last year, *The Atlantic* magazine played out a "war game" in its pages to explore the outcome of a U.S. preemptive strike against Iran. It drew on a recently retired general who was well-acquainted with such games and on other experts. The model for such a strike is the 1981 Israeli preemptive strike against

Iraq's nuclear facility at Osirak. The consensus the participants came to was that a strike on Iran is in no way comparable and that it would probably be ineffective. While Iraq's program was concentrated in a single facility above ground, Iran's program is dispersed in as many as 50 locations, some of which are not known to U.S. intelligence. The largest is underground and cannot be destroyed by conventional bombs. The U.S. would have to fly hundreds of missions, destroy large parts of Iran's infrastructure and cause untold "collateral damage"—all in a dubious effort.

Even then, by some estimates, Iran's nuclear program might be delayed by only a few years, and it would then be resumed with heightened determination and ferocity. After Iraq, not many commentators take seriously the suggestion that bombing Iran would result in an uprising of moderates

against the hardline regime and the emergence of a more moderate country friendly to the West.

Ahmadinejad has warned that in the event of a U.S. strike, he has thousands of young volunteers who would fan out at his behest into Europe and beyond as suicide bombers. Iran could also play the oil card, shutting down not only its own facilities but it could severely disrupt oil shipments from the Middle East for a long time. Another U.S. attack would certainly inflame Muslims and Arabs across the region, not least the Shiites in Iraq. It's not at all certain that there are enough troops in Iraq to withstand a general uprising among the Shiite majority.

Entertaining war games

Playing out such worst possible scenarios has become something of a game in the media and the blogosphere, but they are too horrible to contemplate

seriously. It is very possible the plans described by Hersh in the *New Yorker* were deliberately leaked by the Bush administration in an attempt to pressure Iran to comply to the U.N. order. If so, it is a dangerous game — one more liable to polarize and incite than to lead toward diplomacy.

The relish with which various catastrophic scenarios are played out in words by commentators is no less scary. Some of it is, no doubt, intended to play up the picture of the Bush administration as a bunch of wild-eyed warmongers with apocalypse on the brain, but there's something chilling about seeing such scenarios laid out in print everywhere, as though it were all part of some sort of global Monopoly game.

No one would come out of such a clash untouched. It would harden the Islamic world against the West. It would legitimate the use of tactical nuclear weapons, and it

would further subvert any idea of international order. A new world order would emerge even more polarized than during the Cold War — and much more dangerous.

Although a nuclear Iran is not a pleasant prospect, there is nothing to support the idea that a nuked Iran would be more pleasant. Christopher Hitchens, who has been a strong supporter of the Iraq war, suggests that perhaps Bush ought to fly to Iran, announce the lifting of U.S. sanctions and make use of the large community of Iranians in America to inaugurate a new era of Iran-U.S. relations.

He knows he's only dreaming, I think, but what's a world without dreams? These latest debates about preemptive strikes provide a new urgency to the issues discussed in the Report on war and Peacemaking to be discussed at the upcoming CRC Synod. But it will not make the discussion any easier.

Current history

From protection to insurgency – history of the Mayi-Mayi in Congo

David Hecht

GOMA (IRIN) – Before colonialism in Africa, community life centred on ethnic customs and culture. In pre-colonial Congo, people lived under the authority of a traditional chief, in observance of these cultural norms.

According to Jean-Marie Kati Kati Muhongya, a political analyst in Goma, the capital of North Kivu Province, communities continued their traditional practises even after Congo became a fiefdom of Belgian King Leopold II in the 1880s and later a Belgian colony. One of those customs was to segregate young boys in the bush for up to one month, to prepare them for manhood. Kati Kati said that during their time of seclusion, youths underwent training in many fields, including how to protect their communities from intruders.

In the 1960s, soon after independence from Belgium, politicians who were discontent with the country's leadership organized such youths into armed militia groups. From January 1964, Kati Kati said, one such leader, Pierre Mulele, who served as education minister in post-colonial Congo, organized the youths into strong militias as part of what he termed "the peasants' revolution". A Maoist who was trained in China in guerrilla warfare, Mulele is credited with encouraging a Marxist-Leninist struggle in an effort to remove Mobutu Sese Seko, a Western-backed autocrat.

Kati Kati said Mulele drew support from the traditional chiefs, who were often medicine men, to encourage youths to join the armed struggle. The youths believed that the medicine men had made them invincible to bullets, inspiring the slogan, "Mulele Maji," meaning if you are for Mulele, all bullets directed at you would turn to water. This slogan later evolved into "Mai Mai" or "Mayi Mayi" (Congolese Swahili for "Water Water"). Hence the naming of Mayi-Mayi militia groups in various parts in today's Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

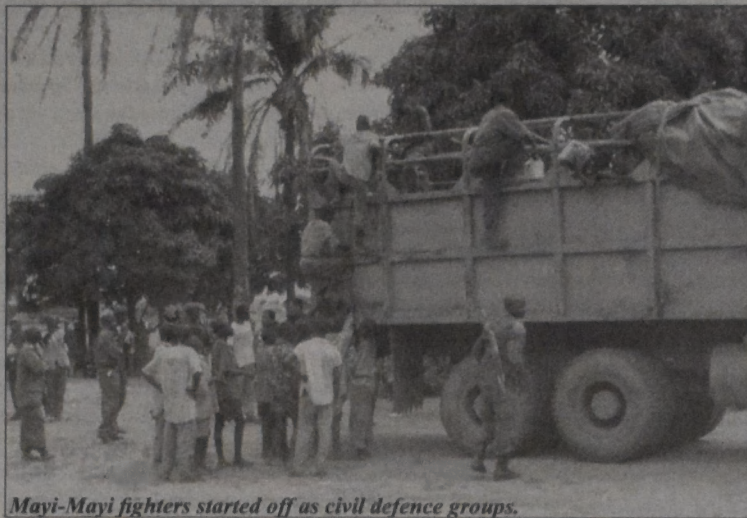
Jason Stearns, a Nairobi-based senior analyst, told IRIN that the Mayi-Mayi have existed in eastern DRC since the so-called "Mulelist rebellion" of the 1960s. The militias reappeared in force in 1993 in North Kivu, from which they spread to the rest of the east. The Mayi-Mayi was a local defence force against the predation of Mobutu's army and the influx of soldiers of the Forces armées Rwandaise (ex-FAR) and "Interahamwe" militiamen from neighboring Rwanda in 1994.

"In that sense, they are the result of a power void, which made communities arm their youth for protection," he said. "They kept this function of community protection throughout the war, and in some cases the population was proud and satisfied for these local defence forces. Indeed, the dawa, or magic, of the Mayi-Mayi comes from the Congolese soil, and the strong patriotism within the group strikes a cord within many Congolese."

Stearns said "Tunafia nchi yetu" (Swahili language for "We die for our country") was the rallying cry of the government-supported Mayi-Mayi when it fought against the Rwandan-backed Rassemblement Congolais pour la démocratie (RCD) rebels in the 1990s. Although many villagers became disillusioned with the Mayi-Mayi, they preferred it to the RCD and the Rwandan army – the latter being seen as foreign forces. Like any militia, the larger the Mayi-Mayi became, the more problems they had with supplies. As a result, they started preying on villages and imposed harsh taxes in markets and along trade routes.

"In this sense, the local communities preferred to be taxed by the Mayi-Mayi rather than by the RCD," he said.

When Mobutu seized power in 1965, he established a national army with recruits from all over the country.



Mayi-Mayi fighters started off as civil defence groups.

Attempts to topple him in 1976 prompted his "tribalizing" the army, with most of the officers being drawn from his home territory in the northwest of the country. Kati Kati said the Mayi-Mayi controlled mining – of minerals including gold, diamonds and coltan – in the east, as well as the rampant regional arms-trafficking trade. As a result, they became quite powerful.

In the early 1990s, discontent with Mobutu's rule led to the formation of several rebel groups, most of them with bases in the east. Some of the Mayi-Mayi militia fought alongside the rebels, but most remained on the government side. These conflicts culminated in the overthrow of Mobutu in 1997 by an alliance of rebel movements led by Laurent Kabila, who seized power and renamed the country the Democratic Republic of Congo. Despite Mobutu's ouster, however, fighting in the east continued. Rivalry for control of the region's mineral resources and interethnic conflict from the late 1990s to date has resulted in attacks against civilians, killing tens of thousands of people and displacing millions of others.

The Mayi-Mayi soon became a force in itself and went beyond its initial function of community protection. Militia warlords like Gen Padiri Bulenda and Col Dunia were supported by the government in Kinshasa, and their influence soon spread outside the confines of their original communities.

"As the Mayi-Mayi often recruits along tribal lines, this became a problem," Stearns said. "When the Tembo of Gen Padiri took control of territory inhabited by the Rega community, for example, strong tensions developed. Padiri's Mayi-Mayi were guilty of widespread rape and abuse around the town of Shabunda."

Regarding the Mayi-Mayi's role in continued instability in the Great Lakes region, Stearns said the big problem was that the group's inclusion in the Congolese peace negotiations that led to the formation of a transitional government in 2003 came too late.

"Because they were a very poorly structured force – it's more realistic to speak of 20 separate groups that are loosely linked – and Kinshasa purposely didn't want them to become a cohesive force, they had poor political representation at the talks," Stearns said.

"Today it is fair to say that the Mayi-Mayi in government do not represent most of the Mayi-Mayi groups in the Kivus and Katanga province," he said. "There is no one to lobby for their interests, and they have been marginalized

in the army and in Kinshasa.... Therefore – and because of their poor discipline – many have fallen out with the national army and reverted to banditry."

They have also become implicated in other regional conflicts. "Precisely because of this poor organization, some Mayi-Mayi have become complicit in gun-running and gold smuggling, linking up with other militia like the FNL [Forces nationales de liberation] in Burundi," Stearns said, adding that there had been collaboration between the FNL and the Mayi-Mayi around Uvira (in South Kivu) and in the Ubware peninsula. Mayi-Mayi are also alleged to have participated in the August 2004 Gatumba massacre in Burundi.

With elections looming in the DRC, Stearns saw the fate of the Mayi-Mayi as relying on two factors. "There need to be two things: better community-driven demobilization programs that provide for jobs or schooling for Mayi-Mayi who have left the army. Secondly, the Mayi-Mayi needs to be given a fair place in the national army," he said.

"Up to 40 percent or 50 percent of some Mayi-Mayi groups were children – what will happen to them now? How will they be integrated into society after four to seven years in the army?"

"If they feel marginalized in the army," he warned, "they will revert to banditry and will become mercenaries available to the myriad of discontented politicians in the east who will lose power in elections."

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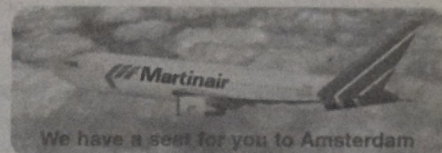
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Editorial

Ruminations of a cultural immigrant

Harry der Nederlanden

As I read the news every week, scanning developments and trends for which CC can perhaps summarize and provide a bit of context, I spend quite a bit of time peeking over the fence at other countries. All by means of the printed word, of course. Some of our contributors are more fortunate. They get to visit far away lands in person, to walk the streets, smell the markets and interact with the people. They get to experience another culture first hand and to feel the difference.

Periodically I'm overwhelmed by the thought of how very, very different human lives can be. In a great many parts of the world there are people every bit as smart and talented as you and I, there are children every bit as much gifted and eager as our own, but they must toil anxiously from dawn to dusk to get enough to eat. They count themselves fortunate if they get a few years of schooling. And there are no dream careers waiting for them when they graduate. Any job at all is considered a blessing.

We like to think that our success is in our hands, a product of our own talents and hard work. It is 99 percent perspiration, the saying goes. But with the media bringing pictures and stories of other lands and other cultures into our homes, we know this isn't true.

Had we been born into a poor village in Mexico, we too would be living a hard-scrabble existence, perhaps undernourished, working longer hours with less energy, dreaming of greater opportunities north of the border. A recent news program followed a family of illegal aliens who had made a new life for themselves somewhere in the Las Vegas area. Without benefit of legal status and public education, they had achieved a good life north of the border. They drove a car several years newer than mine; they lived in a new home considerably more impressive than mine; and their furniture made mine look ratty. Yes, the entire family worked hard, and possessions aren't everything. But no matter how hard they would have worked in Mexico, they probably would have remained poor. Yet, in America they were flourishing.

It is no wonder that thousands are flinging themselves over the border every month. Most of our parents braved the trauma and dislocation of immigration simply because they saw more opportunity on this side of the Atlantic. In comparison to the Mexican "immigrants," for them the difference in opportunity was rather slight, but it was enough

to make them break family ties, learn a new language and risk much.

For that Mexican family, the difference was very visible and tangible. It was measured in terms of possessions – a house, a car, clothes, appliances, television, computers. But I doubt that they would tell you it was just about getting stuff that they risked all to cross the border. It was about something less tangible caught inadequately in the word "opportunity" – the chance to make something more of one's life, the chance to grow. In America, in Canada, each day does not just bring them the same hard struggle day after day; life offers a new horizon. Possibilities.

We take those possibilities for granted. They are, after all, invisible. We can peer at pictures of other cultures and walk around in other lands, but we don't see possibilities. Possibilities are something we have to imagine.

But they are not imaginary. They are created for us by a long history, by various complex networks and institutions of a society: the political order, the legal system, the world of business, manufacturing and trade, labor organizations and labor laws, the system of schools from elementary to university, hospitals and drug companies, the vast complex of book publishers, television and radio stations, newspapers and magazines that keep us informed and entertained. All these different spheres of human enterprise bring us visible, tangible things. But they arise and are sustained by invisible things, by a kind of corporate know-how and laws and mores that no single discipline or expert can describe.

We use portmanteau words like *culture* or *civilization* to name this complex network of relationships that makes all this activity possible and that somehow more or less coordinates it all. Various disciplines and thinkers have attempted to oversee and map certain dimensions of specific cultures. The discipline of sociology, and its many sub-disciplines, tries to make sense of parts of it, but it belongs as much to the historians, the political scientists, the professors of law, the economists, and the students of development to tell us how it all works. And don't forget the scholars of religion.

Max Weber's book associating the successes of capitalism with Puritanism is still used in the universities. And I still have old monographs in Dutch in my library that trace the political liberties, the economic progress and the art and literature of the Dutch to Calvinism.

A book that has stirred considerable discussion treads some of the same ground. Rodney Stark, a sociologist and historian at Baylor university, has written *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism and Western Success*. With a sweeping thesis like that, you can imagine that the book has been pilloried as well as praised. He sets his thesis over against the materialists who root culture in geography and other environmental factors. Looking back at the West's success as compared to other civilizations like those of China, India and Islam, he asked, Why did Europeans excel in so many areas? What is the source of this almost unimaginable productivity and progress?

Unlike Max Weber, he does not pause at Calvinism. He goes further back. He argues that Christianity from the beginning embraced reason as a primary guide to truth. It was this confidence in reason that gave rise to both capitalism and science, Stark argues, and these in turn are the source of Western progress.

Most of us would argue with that thesis. Even more fundamental than confidence in reason, one would think, is the trust in a Creator God who made a world that is good and that is ordered, and who equipped and called us to join him in developing the created potential of that world. It is

an affirmative vision: the world is a horizon of possibilities for growth, but the invisible horizons are those of God's Kingdom and of the shalom of the new heaven and the new earth.

In the last couple of issues I talked about the great gift of nature, not just as a resource, but of the healing qualities of its very being, in all its wildness. To experience our full humanity, we need to be able to simply feel at home among the fields and streams, the trees and hills and sometimes gaze at the stars overhead. We experience God's presence in his natural creation.

But this network of invisible things that provides us with our possibilities as workers and citizens, as artists and scientists, as thinkers and believers, is no less a part of our "natural" environment. We do not individually create it. It is part of what we inherit; it is handed down to us. Yet, it is more, much more than a merely human creation. It is a response to God's creation.

This was especially brought home to me as I lay in the hospital recuperating from my operation for colorectal cancer (and subsequent complications). The window of my hospital room looked out over the Niagara escarpment, so every morning I watched the sun slowly rise over the escarpment trees to burnish their autumn colors. And every morning the same song sounded in my head: "I looked up, and I saw my Lord a-coming..." And I felt cared for.

At the same time, weak and helpless, attached to tubes, I was completely dependent on the skills and technology provided by the hospital, the doctors and the nurses. In most countries of the world an ordinary fellow like myself would have died of colorectal cancer. The powers of healing did not just come directly from the God who visited me every morning, or from the healing powers of my body. Not even from the skills of the surgeon and the dedicated care of the nurses. The doctors, the nurses, the entire idea of a hospital and an institution to care for the sick and the technology to go with it – all these are the products of a long history.

There are numerous tributaries that feed into that great cultural gift, some of them non-Christian – from classical Greek and even Islamic scholars. Perhaps even Calvin's Geneva played a role in developing a full-fledged diaconate that included organized care for the ailing. Some of the characters who developed remedies and medicines in their labs were not entirely orthodox either. But to produce something that would truly benefit humanity, they all had to learn the vocabulary of God's good creation. They had to learn something of what God has done – for us.

I was especially aware of that when I was helpless. But even when we are hale and hearty, we are less independent and less capable than we think. A slight shift in geography and in culture, and we would be struggling to survive – like the Afrikaners in the story on the back page.

Some critics, overwhelmed by the inequality, the poverty and the injustice in the world describe Western culture as a disease, a perversion, a vast conspiracy of the rich against the poor. That is to blind oneself to the great gift this culture is. It is to blind ourselves, too, to the immanence of God in human history. However, even the greatest and the finest gifts can be perverted, can be hoarded, can blind us to the Giver.

Whenever I participate in the Lord's Supper, as I take the bread and the wine – products of the land and of our agriculture – I also think of the vast network of culture, the economic and political order, that produces the bread and the wine. I can do nothing to accomplish my own salvation. I must simply, gratefully, receive it from the hand of God. And that is no less true of every other opportunity that life on this earth and in this country offers us. *Soli deo gratia.*

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EDITORIAL TEAM & PRODUCTION STAFF

Editor: Harry der Nederlanden editor@christiancourier.ca
Circulation: Rose der Nederlanden rose@christiancourier.ca
Accounts/Advertising Manager: Ineke Medcalf-Strayer
ads@christiancourier.ca

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Opinion

All his enemies and mine (IV)

"Our twofold enemy and twofold war"

John Bolt

Once we recover the notion of enemy in our times (I, March 20), I have suggested in the previous three articles, we will discover that the enemy we face today in the war on terrorism is both ruthless (II, April 3) and fantastic (III, April 17). Our enemy will not be deterred from acts of deadly destruction and mayhem because he is not influenced by rational calculation of self-interest; he is ruthless and determined. Nor does he care enough about the final success of his campaign to bother with such strategic calculation; he lives in a fantasy world where the theatrical and spectacular effects of his deeds are the important thing, not their militarily strategic value.

Readers might find it helpful to reread the preceding paragraph and ask whether the description doesn't sound familiar to biblically literate Christians. Doesn't it remind you of the fantastic and utterly ruthless enemy described by the Apostle Peter: "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. [So] be self-controlled and alert" (1 Peter 5:8)?

What good does it do to compare the enemy of civilization we call world-wide terrorism with the Bible's description of the devil? In fact, isn't it a bad thing to make the comparison? After all, when we demonize people don't we deny the image of God in them? That last question is important; when we demonize people we give up on them, we consider them worth only destruction and extermination. And that, obviously, is something that Christians may never do.

But, then, you may well ask me, isn't that the direction you have been headed in your three articles so far? Didn't you even quote Lee Harris, "we have no choice but to kill them first"?

If you asked me the question I just rhetorically posed to myself, I would thank you for being a careful and perceptive reader and then ask to be allowed to explain further.

That is what I shall attempt in this article by making a distinction between two enemies, two kingdoms, two wars, and two quite different military strategies.

From the earliest days of the Christian church followers of Jesus have known that they are citizens of two kingdoms. Like all other people they are born citizens of a particular nation, they acquire the language and customs of that nation simply by habit and enculturation. If you grow up in Friesland you become a Frisian; in Seoul you become a Korean; you don't choose it; you are born into it. Of course some people do choose to change their citizenship; in my relatively short life I have been a citizen of three different countries.

But for Christians there is another kingdom that claims a higher allegiance than any earthly nation or sovereignty. As the Apostle Paul told us: "But our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20). The writer to the Hebrews reminds us that all the Old Testament saints were pilgrims, sojourners who were able to endure by faith because "they were looking for a better country," or as he says about Abraham "a city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Heb. 11: 10, 16). A clear statement of this conviction is found in the Second Century anonymous *Letter to Diognetus*:

For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity. . . . But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if



foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry, as do all [others]; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven.

From this we learn our first responsibility with respect to the world's terrorists: We are called to convert them, to turn them away from their idolatrous commitment to an Islamic theocratic world order in which all non-Muslims are to submit or die. We are called to go to them with the Gospel of Christ, to live among them, love them, preach to them, witness to them, call them to discipleship in Christ's kingdom. No one promised that bring the gospel to the nations would be easy; Boniface died bringing it to the pagan Frisians. Conversion is possible for terrorists.

That is our first citizenship responsibility and we need to devote much more of our energy, our prayer, our mission efforts to reach Muslims with the gospel. That is our number one Christian warfare obligation. The weapons we have available to us are described in Ephesians 6; the full armor of God. And that answers the question about demonizing our terrorist enemy. If we demonize them as citizens of this world then we fail as Christians to meet our first obligation. To the degree that we consider world terrorism demonic, we must fight with the spiritual weapons described in Ephesians 6. Nothing more, which in this case is really, nothing less.

What about our other citizenship obligation? We are not only citizens of Christ's kingdom, but also citizens of earthly nations that are part of the Western world under attack by Islamofascist radicals. The State carries the sword, not the message

See *Enemies* on p. 6 . . .



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Status/Child-care

The new worry: Status anxiety

Thousands of anxious parents will push their way towards a centre aisle this spring in order to get digital evidence of their child's graduation. Everyone seems to swell with either pride or disbelief as degrees are bestowed onto successive hands. The graduates step off the platform, with cap and gown, and march into a new stage of life, conferred with a new status.

This rite of passage is no right. It is the product of years of striving and toil – on behalf of both parents and student. In fact, the work may have begun at birth already, when the parents marched into the bank and opened up that college fund. It's been a long, long road.

There is deep virtue in this: we are stewarding our energies, developing our gifts, and learning about God's world for the sake of kingdom service. But there may be a dark underside to this, a nervousness about "finding a place" in this world that does not end at graduation. Alain de Botton has labeled this dis-ease "status anxiety" in his book of the same name.

De Botton notes how our hunger for sex has been set to music and analyzed in textbooks, but our equally insatiable appetite for love from the world remains in shameful shadows. Our basic need for standing in society – to be thought of as valuable and cared for – comes with as much heartbreak as romance, but few recognize its pull on the human psyche. His book opens up the conversation in a fresh way, for "the most profitable way of addressing the condition may be to attempt to understand and to speak of it."

Perform or perish

Status anxiety is "a worry, so pernicious as to be capable of ruining extended stretches of our lives, that we are in danger of failing to conform to the ideals of success laid down by our society and that we may as a result be stripped of dignity and respect." We rely on signs of our value from others, and when we perceive our relative place on the social ladder has been lowered in their eyes, we feel humiliated. Since status in our society is based to a large extent on achievement, our frenzy for work accelerates, and though we may gain the world, we forfeit our souls.

In the first half of the book, de Botton examines some of the causes of this modern anxiety. He describes how lovelessness reigns in a society that measures significance by the abundance of material possessions. Because we are told there is equal opportunity for such achievement, one's income mirrors one's status. "In America," de Botton quotes Tocqueville, "I never met a citizen too poor to cast a glance of hope and envy towards the pleasures of the rich." This was not part of the medieval universe: your place in the hierarchy was where you remained for life. It was not a question.

Enemies ... continued from p. 5

and hope of the gospel. It is true of course that Christian statesmanship brings with it certain important qualifications of the pure will-to-power and ruthless ambition that has often characterized statesmen turned empire builders. National or personal self-aggrandizement are forbidden to Christian statesmen and military people; their responsibility is a just and peaceful order of law.

But, unlike the War and Peace Report coming to the CRC Synod in the summer of 2006 which, in my judgment, confuses the two realms of church and government, we should not set up impossible standards for civil authority that cripples its ability to deal justly with terrorists. It is not the task of governments and militaries to bring *gospel shalom* to the world; they can't and shouldn't try. That is the task of the church and Christian believers. Governments do not carry

Eternal Student

Peter Schuurman



Additionally, as modern secularism saturates our cultural self-conception, the after-life is deemed a childish opiate. The pressure to succeed here and now is thus intensified, as one's earthly ambitions are "all one will ever amount to." "Status symbols" replace the symbols of faith, and the cult of celebrity over-shadows Sunday worship.

De Botton also mentions how "snobs" contribute to this worry, as well as how the general uncertainty of contemporary life deepens it. He explains how our status is too dependent on "fickle talent", luck, employers' whims, employers' profit, and the ups and downs of a global economy to ever have any security. Trusting in the cap and gown for status, in this light, is faith in a capricious god.

Cultural therapy

Status anxiety has its uses: it can motivate people to use their talents and contribute to the common good. But it also has "an exceptional capacity to inspire sorrow" and "can also kill."

De Botton finds a solution to our malaise in five different places, three of which I will briefly describe. The first is in philosophy, where he suggests an intelligent misanthropy – treating the negative evaluation of others with contempt. Secondly, religion and death both offer a different perspective than the ruling ethos – death by revealing the trivialness of our aspirations for attention from others, and religion (and he mentions Christianity specifically) by testifying to our status as beloved of God by his grace. Christ's example turns our pretensions to importance upside-down.

The final chapter suggests there is wisdom to be found in the life of bohemians – those cultured despisers of bourgeoisie life. Bohemians are those "saboteurs of the economic meritocracy" who valued "openness to the wider world and ... devotion to the primary repository of feeling which was art." They are a secular analogy to the monastics, seeking an alternative to the life of money, materialism, and efficiency.

One classic bohemian is Henry Thoreau, who left the city for a cabin in the woods in order to live an "outwardly simple but inwardly rich existence." "Man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can do without," he said. "Money is not required to buy one necessity of the soul."

Although bohemians have their excesses, their disdain for a life measured by wealth and furious activity is a gift we can appreciate. Sometimes we perform for the gods of status rather than the God who calls us to service by his grace. Our status ultimately depends on who we believe is watching us.

Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed Education Mission Leader and resides in Guelph, Ontario.



Bibles but the sword.

In the face of world terrorism's stated goal to destroy us, with 9/11 a fitting symbol of their fantastic and ruthless ambition, it is our responsibility as Christian citizens to call on the governments and leaders of the world to use that sword, effectively and justly. Not because we think of them as demonic but because we have no alternative but to stop marauding killers from killing innocent and weak civilians in our world. Since, that topic demands greater attention than I can give it in these short articles, I will devote a full essay to my critique of the CRC War and Peace Study Committee Report at a later date.

For my final article in this series I want to turn our attention away from terrorists and to God. What does it mean that we have made God our enemy? How does the way he handles our enmity help us see how we must deal with our enemies?

Evaluating Tory GST & child-care plans

Ron Gray, Leader of the Christian Heritage Party

The Conservatives' election pledge to cut the GST from seven percent to six may have been good politics, says the Fraser Institute's resident tax expert, but it's bad economics.

Hans Grubel, in a recent edition of *Fraser Forum*, said a cut in the income tax would be much more beneficial to the economy. Grubel's reasoning may seem to fly in the face of traditional economics, which routinely calls any sales tax "regressive"; but his logic is impeccable. He relies on the dictum that taxing an activity reduces it, and subsidizing an activity will bring more of it. Consumer taxes reduce consumption, stimulating savings and investment; income taxes reduce the incentive to earn or invest.

Similarly, the \$100 per month 'baby bonus boost' may have good political optics, but it has no justification in either family or economic policy.

With some families paying as much as \$1,100 a month for child care, the Tories' baby bonus – especially after the clawback of taxes – is less than ten percent of what's needed to provide child care. That's not much help.

More important, the baby bonus – to whatever extent it might help families meet child-care costs – still encourages them to warehouse their children during the day so both parents can work to pay the tax-man.

By comparison, the CHP's Family-Friendly Tax Credit has a laser-like focus on strengthening the family: it would provide five to ten times as much money – but only to families that choose to provide day-time care for their own children. That's a clear public policy focus that says, "Parent care is a positive social benefit; it should be encouraged."

Some economists have calculated that if the one-third of the workforce's second-income earners were to all stay home, it would cost governments about \$34 billion a year in taxes. Of course, under the CHP's Family-Friendly Tax Credit plan, not all those second-income earners would opt out of the workforce. Some two-income families are what statisticians call "DINKs": Dual Income, No Kids. They don't need child-care. And some dual-income families with children would choose to continue to have day-care workers or nannies care for their children during the day.

Still, if the CHP plan were adopted, and half the second-income earners decided to follow Dr. Laura Schlessinger's advice – her most recent book is entitled *Don't Have Them if You Won't Raise Them* – the tax loss might be about \$17 billion. Add to that about \$18 billion of income taxes reduced by the tax credit, and the cost is about \$35 billion. But, as Hans Grubel says, an income tax cut is better for the economy, and this is an income tax cut.

But far more important is the personal benefit to children of growing up in a family under parent care, which research shows is almost always more beneficial, long-term, than institutional care. Add to that the social benefits of strengthening the married, two-parent family – less crime, less substance abuse, less premature sexual involvement, less teen pregnancy and fewer abortions are just a few of the benefits – and the long-term savings to society will far, far exceed any loss of tax revenues.

It's time Ottawa learned that families exist to produce and nurture the next generation of citizens, and to transmit the culture to them – not to increase the reach of federal government power over our lives by pouring their wealth into the federal coffers.

Stewardship

Dragging the ocean for whales

Christopher DeVinck

At one point, all the starlings, sparrows, woodpeckers, turtle doves, and blue jays at the bird feeder disappear for the night as if on cue. Perhaps they are guided by a sudden, diminished sunset. Perhaps they have a built-in clock that tells them when it is time to fly inside the brush and sleep for the night. But the rabbit stays. It stands on its hind legs and fore legs, shakes its ears, and chews, rhythmically, at the birdseeds that have fallen from the small, plastic bird feeder that I fill every two or three days.

Sometimes at midnight, when I let the dog out, I look to my left, and there, often enough, is the rabbit happily chewing the seeds in the darkness. Of course I didn't realize that a rabbit's most active time in the wild is in the night.

Fairies, fireflies, rabbits and bears all inhabit the shadows of the night and the shadows of what I remember as a boy, when I could not sleep and imagined that spirits stepped out from behind the trees wearing firefly necklaces, or having tea with the rabbits and bears.

Children understand creative juxtapositions: goldfish and magic; kites and seashores; castles and sand. So what does a man think when he finds a rabbit in his yard in the middle of the night? I admit I sometimes pretend that it is a messenger, bringing me word that the Queen of Hearts demands my presence at her next croquet game, or that I am Jimmy Stewart imagining that there is a six foot rabbit wearing a tie and leaning against the oak tree.

Three days ago, Roe and I spent four hours on the ocean off Cape Ann, Massachusetts in search of whales. After one hour on the tour vessel, the guide announced, "Two o'clock, the spout of a humpbacked whale!" The captain of the ship spun his wheel, pushed the engines to full throttle so that we could speed, at a safe distance, alongside the rolling whale. And there it was: long, black, floating on the surface, and then it silently, magically slid underwater, and just before it disappeared, its tail rose up into the air, and then slowly slipped into the calm, blue water. Roe turned to me and said, with conviction and delight, "This is a privilege to see this."

"Whales never sleep," the guide said as we all began to look for more spouts of water. "And they have to think about breathing. We human beings breathe automatically, but a whale has to consciously make a decision and think about breathing, that is why it can never sleep."

In the middle of the night, when I am restlessly turning in my bed, when I cannot sleep, all the whales in the world are swimming, floating, blowing air out from the tops of their heads. "Whales do rest, however, for long periods of time. They float on the surface and breathe, sometimes at twenty minute intervals. In this relaxed state they do accumulate enough rest. This is called logging because they look like huge logs just floating on the surface of the water."

We saw two humpbacked whales logging. We saw a fin whale, the second largest whale in the world, swim within feet of our boat, and then disappear with its tail extended in the air before plunging into the water. "A number of years ago," the guide continued, "an old man came to us with a shoe box. Inside the box were hundreds of photographs of whales. The man said that when he was young, in the 1930's, he loved sailing out on the ocean and taking pictures of the whales diving, floating, breaching, swimming. He wanted to know if the pictures would be of any interest to us."

In the distance, a large spray of water broke the surface. "We said to the old man, 'Yes! We would love to have the pictures.' And because of those photographs, we have been able to identify many whales still living today by the shape and color of their tails. Imagine a young man taking pictures of these very whales seventy-five years ago."

Rabbits roam at night. Whales loll on the surface of the water. Old men keep shoe boxes of photographs from the days when they were young and anxious to seek out beauty with their little cameras.

Mark Twain wrote in his famous book, *Life on the Mississippi*, about his way of daydreaming: "When I'm playful, I use meridians of longitude and parallels of latitude for a seine, and drag the Atlantic Ocean for whales. I scratch my head with lightning and purr myself to sleep with the thunder."

Let us all be playful, and purr ourselves to sleep as we drag the ocean for whales, or transform ourselves into the mad March hare, and stir the fields at midnight as we continue to make the conscious decision to breathe.

Talents 1: Identification

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us.... Romans 12:6a

The Spirit's gifts are here to stay in rich variety-fitting responses to timely needs. We thankfully see each other as gifted members of the fellowship which delights in the creative Spirit's work. He gives more than enough to each believer for God's praise and our neighbor's welfare.

Our World Belongs to God – 33.

God created mankind in his own image. It was the template he used when he shaped us. Yet, we are not all the same. God loves variety. Neither have we been endowed with the same gifts: skills, abilities, and aptitudes. We each have our own subset that reflects aspects of God's image.

Do you know what your special gifts are? It's important that you discover what they are. These gifts can be both practical and spiritual. How do you find out? Here are some practical suggestions to get you on the 'road of discovery':

Ask a close friend or colleague – someone who knows you. If you are a student and have a teacher that you personally can get along with – ask him or her. Ask them to give you some feedback on your gift set.

Take some of the on-line tests that look at vocation, aptitude, skills, and spiritual gifts. Any of these key words in a 'search engine' generates a lot of results. Many secondary school guidance programs use these types of test to help students direct their career and post-secondary education plans. Henrietta Hielema, a teacher at Woodland Christian High School, helps her students by guiding them through various 'gift survey' tests – Christian and secular, many of them web based. There are several she recommends. One such site is this one: www.communityfellowship.org/resources/tools/spiritualgiftinventory.asp for spiritual gifts. These tests, with her guidance, helps her students in their self-discovery and leads them to make better choices for their career paths.

I was surprised how many resources are available, many are initially free

Reflections on Stewardship

Rick De Graaf

and but make a charge if you want more detail. These little tests (like the one I tried at www.livecareer.com) usually have sets of statements that require you to choose which best reflects you. I tried a few and found them to be helpful in describing my 'gift set'.

For high school students consider the six session series from Faith Alive: "Youth – Discover Your Gifts".

For adults consider the seven session series from Faith Alive: "Discover Your Gifts" – 21 gifts are mentioned in the scriptures and the book is helpful in distinguishing the difference between "working" and "waiting" gifts.

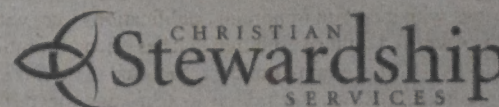
Finding out about your gifts is important for everyone, but especially for young people. Discovering your gifts helps identify and confirm areas of strength. It leads to a deliberate program of developing these gifts (more on that next issue) – to honor God and to provide service with contentment using the gifts that God has given you.

Stewardly Tip: A personal review. Maybe it's just me, but I've found that my 'working' spiritual gift set has changed over time as I take on new challenges and opportunities. I believe it is a worthwhile exercise to do a self-assessment annually but at least once every 5-7 years. Call it a personal retreat. Look back, study Romans 12 or 1Cor. 12 or material suggested above, reflect on God's faithfulness and pray for his guidance as you consider and prepare for the future. He is the one who 'opens' and 'shuts' doors of opportunity – we just have to be willing to listen and take action.

Readers: Share your 'Stewardly Tips' so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestion and your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask for more details.

Next issue: Talents 2: Development

Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario Rick's email: rickd@csservices.ca



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Liturgy

Creation liturgy

European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) made this liturgical material on themes related to God's creation available to the churches for use in the Fall of 2005, but many parts are no less appropriate in Spring. This is only a selection. More prayers and texts of earlier years are available and can be obtained from the office of the Conference of European Churches in Geneva.

I. Call to Worship

Loving creator

Loving Creator,
you care for the land by sending rain;
you make it fertile and fruitful.
All your creation sings for joy.

When we take care of the land,
sowing the seed and reaping the harvest,
All your creation sings for joy.

When we keep streams and rivers clean,
when we respect the purity of lakes and seas,
All your creation sings for joy.

When we recognise that we are one family,
brothers and sisters together,
with responsibility for the land and the waters,
All your creation sings for joy
for you bless us abundantly all our days.

(Per Harling, from *Gloria Deo*, Prayers & Hymns for 12th Assembly of CEC, 2003)

Blessed are you, O Lord our God

Blessed are you, O Lord our God,
life and light of the universe,
the one in whom the whole of creation
is nurtured and held.

Because of your tender mercy
the rising dawn comes to us each new day,
to shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death.

May you guide our feet into the paths of peace,
and lead us deeper into your life and praise.

(from *Encircling Prayer*, Students and Staff of the Luther King House,
Partnership for Theological Education, Manchester, 2000)

From Psalm 104

Bless the Lord, O my soul.
O Lord, my God, you are very great.
You are clothed with honour and majesty,
wrapped in light as with a garment.
(sing) Halleluja

You stretch out the heavens like a tent,
you set the beams of your chambers on the waters,
you set the earth on its foundations,
so that it shall never be shaken.

(sing) Halleluja

You make springs gush forth in the valleys;
they flow between the hills,
giving drink to every wild animal.
(sing) Halleluja

You cause the grass to grow for the cattle,
and plants for people to use,
to bring forth food from the earth,
and wine to gladden the human heart.
(sing) Halleluja

May the glory of the Lord endure forever,
May the Lord rejoice in his works.

(from *Words and Songs of Reconciliation*, 2nd European
Ecumenical Assembly, Graz 1997)

May the Lover of Creation...

May the Lover of Creation,
who gives birth to all things,
the Beloved, who meets us in Jesus,
and the Spirit who joins us in love,
Three-in-Communion, One God,
make us a community of hope and wholeness,
loving the last and the least,
making peace, resisting evil,
and caring for the good earth,
till all things are fulfilled in the great dance of God;
and may God be praised, now and for ever. Amen.

(copyright © Brian Wren, from *What Does the Lord Require*, compiled
by Francis Brienen, Canterbury Press, 2000. Used by permission)

Our Creator calls us

Our Creator calls us,
our Maker gathers us.

Let us come into God's presence with thanksgiving.

In wisdom God gave birth to all things,
loving and cherishing the earth.

*Let us love God's earth
and rejoice in its abundant life.*

In Christ, God loves us to the uttermost.

*Let us become what we are, the body of Christ,
walking together in justice and peace.*

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by Francis Brienen, Canterbury Press, 2000. Used with Permission.)

II. Praise

From Psalm 36

With you is the fountain of life;
in your light we see light.

With you is the fountain of life.

Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens;
your faithfulness to the clouds.

With you is the fountain of life.

Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,
your judgements are like the great deep;
you save humans and animals alike, O Lord.

With you is the fountain of life.

How precious is your steadfast love, O God!
All people take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

With you is the fountain of life.

They feast on the abundance of your house;
and you give them to drink from the river of your delights.

With you is the fountain of life.

(from *Gloria Deo*, Prayer & Hymns for the 12th Assembly of CEC, 2003)

God of power, God of people

God of power, God of people,
you are the life of all living things,

the energy that fills the earth,
the vitality that brings to birth,

the impetus toward making whole whatever is bruised
or broken.

In you we grow to know the truth that sets all creation free.

You are the song that the whole earth sings,
the promise liberation brings, now and forever.

(from *Words and Songs of Reconciliation and Praise*, Graz, 1997)

Great are you, O Lord

Great are you, O Lord,
and wondrous are your works,
and no word will suffice to sing your wonders.
For you by your will
have out of nothingness brought all things into being
and by your power sustain all creation,
and by your providence direct the world.
You from the four elements have formed creation
and have crowned the cycle of the year with the four seasons.

All the spiritual powers tremble before you;
the sun praises you; the moon glorifies you;
the stars in their courses meet with you;
the light hearkens unto you;
the depths shudder at your presence;
the springs of water serve you.

You have stretched out the heavens as a curtain;
you have founded the earth upon the waters;
you have bounded the sea with sand;
you have poured forth the air for breathing;
the angelic powers minister unto you...

(excerpt from the Orthodox Great Blessing of Water)

Bless the whole creation

Verse:

*If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,
Lord who could stand?*

For with you there is forgiveness. (Psalm 129,3)

O Christ,
who brought all things into existence from nothing,
and with ineffable wisdom
gave to each one to accomplish unerringly the goal
which you laid down in the beginning,
O Saviour, Lover of humankind,
as you are powerful,
bless the whole creation which you fashioned.

Verse:

*For your name's sake I have waited for you, O Lord;
my soul has waited for your word,
my soul has hoped in the Lord.* (Psalm 129,5)

Give peace to all the nations, Lord,
and understanding in all things,
so that we may lead our life in tranquility
and always keep the laws
which you laid down for all creation
for the unalterable maintenance
and government of the universe.

Verse:

*From the watch of dawn until the night,
from the watch of dawn,
let Israel hope in the Lord.* (Psalm 129,6)

Lover of humankind,
keep unharmed the environment that clothes the earth,
through which, by your will,
we who inhabit the earth live and move and have our being,
that we, your unworthy suppliants,
may be delivered from destruction and ruin.

Verse:

*For with the Lord there is mercy,
and with him abundant redemption,
and he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.* (Psalm 129,7)

Fence round the whole creation, Christ Saviour,
with the mighty strength of your love for humankind,
and deliver the earth we inhabit
from the corruption which threatens it;
for we, your servants, have set our hopes on you.

Verse:

*Praise the Lord all nations!
Extol him all peoples.* (Psalm 116)

Liturgy



Put an end, O Saviour,
to the evil designs which are being devised against us
by senseless intent,
and turn aside from the earth every destructive action
of the works of human hands
which contrive corruption
leading to perdition.

Verse:

**For great is his mercy to us,
and the truth of the Lord endures for ever.** (Psalm 116)

O Lord, who wraps creation in clouds,
watch over the environment of the earth,
which you created from the beginning
for the preservation of mortals,
and give us the breath of the winds and the flow of waters.

(from an Orthodox Office of Supplication for the Environment and
for the Whole Creation.)

Laudamus

Trees and flowers and mountain springs
praise the grace of you, Creator,
in whose breathing birds can sing,
in whose love creation grows.
Scents of forests, dancing winds,
rain and sunshine, crystal snowflakes
bring their soundless joy to you,
God of life and truth.

You were born as a child of peace
and you walked the way of the passion.
Through us love may yet increase
as we walk the way of Christ.
Every little newborn child, men and women,
every heartbeat bring their joy of life to you, **
God of life and truth.

Hear the sound of the blowing wind,
whispering our longing prayers.
Holy Spirit, come and bring life and peace
for times to come.
Listen: People sing new songs,
love is breathing, truth is winning,
and we lay our hope in you,
God of life and truth.

(Per Harling)

Praise the Lord throughout all the ages

Praise the Lord, all works of the Lord.
Praise the Lord, you heavens, you angels of the Lord.
Praise the Lord, all waters above heaven.
Praise the Lord, all powers,
Praise the Lord, sun and moon, stars of heaven.
Praise the Lord, all rain and dew, all winds.
Praise the Lord, sing and exalt him
throughout all the ages.

Praise the Lord, fire and heat,
cold and summer heat,
dews and snows.
Praise the Lord, nights and days,
light and darkness.
Praise the Lord, ice and cold, frosts and snows.
Praise the Lord, lightning and clouds.
Praise the Lord, sing and exalt him
throughout all the ages.

Let the earth bless the Lord.
Praise the Lord, mountains and hills,
all things that grow on the earth.
Praise the Lord, you springs, seas and rivers.
Praise the Lord, you whales
and all creatures that move in the waters.
Praise the Lord, all birds of the air, all beasts and cattle.
Praise the Lord, sing and exalt him
throughout all the ages.

Praise the Lord, you sons and daughters of men.
Praise the Lord, O Israel.
Praise the Lord, you priests of the Lord.
Praise the Lord, you servants of the Lord.
Praise the Lord, spirits and souls of the righteous.
Praise the Lord, you who are holy and humble in heart.
Praise the Lord, Ananiah, Azariah and Mishael.
Praise the Lord, apostles, prophets and martyrs of the Lord.
We praise the Father, the Son
and the Holy Spirit.
Now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

**We praise, bless and worship the Lord,
singing and exalting him throughout the ages.**

(Orthodox Vesper hymn, Holy Saturday, from the Hymn of the Three
Youth in the Book of Daniel according to the Septuagint)

A prayer of commitment

God has given us the world to care for,
let us commit ourselves to caring for God's creation.
Amen. We respond to God's gift.

Let us use our control over the natural world
wisely and sensitively.

Amen. We dedicate our efforts to serving God's Kingdom.

Let us exercise our husbandry of animals and birds
without exploitation.

Amen. May no creature suffer cruelty at our hands.

Let us nurture green and growing things
for nourishment and beauty.

**Amen. May we use all advances in knowledge to enrich life
on earth.**

Let us do all we can to keep pure the soil,
the air and the water that give us life.

Amen. May we cherish the earth.

Let us resist the temptation to exploit and pollute
for profit and convenience.

Amen. We cannot serve God and money.

Let us love our neighbors and open our hearts
to the needs of the poor.

**Amen. Jesus said: 'There is more happiness in giving than
in receiving.'**

Let us pass on to our children and the generations yet to come
a world fit to be called home for the whole created order.

**Amen. May we learn to appreciate the wonder of God's world.
In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.**

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III. Blessing

On the land

May the land be blessed by God.
May the earthly fields be full of goodness,
giving sustenance to all that grows.
May the sun shine on the farm,
encouraging life, giving warmth.
May God our Creator bless the land.

May the waters be given by God.
May the rain come in due season,
irrigating the earth for new growth;
may the rivers and lakes be brimming,
home to bright shoals of fish.

May God our Life-giver bless us with rain.

May the animals receive God's blessing.
May the cows be healthy and strong,
giving wholesome milk each day.
May the sheep be numerous and fit,
each with a thick coat of wool.

May God our Shepherd bless our livestock with health.

May the farmers be blessed by God.
May they be given wisdom and skill
to farm the land, making it productive.
May they be given compassion and sensitivity
to look after the animals placed in their care.
May God our Parent bless those who farm the land.

May the land be blessed by God.
May sun and rain and earth combine
To give us the fruitfulness of the fields;
may human beings and animals be partners
to give us joy in the harvest.

May God our Vine-dresser bless our land.

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Statements in boldface are congregational responses.

Prison ministry

A captive audience for salvation

Jane Lampman

NASHVILLE, TENN.— The U.S. has the highest incarceration level in the world, and its prisons serve too consistently as revolving doors. Are faith-based programs in prisons the answer to these disturbing trends?

The largest private company running prisons and jails in the United States, Corrections Corporation of America, thinks so. CCA has embarked on a major initiative to expand such programs in all 63 facilities it operates under contract with local, state, and federal governments.

"These programs give inmates hope and prepare them to be different people," says John Lanz, CCA's director of industry and special programs.

While the ambitious approach wins kudos from some inmates, other people question its constitutionality.

Though not directly supported by President Bush's faith-based initiative, CCA's program poses the same questions about how to encourage positive change in people's lives without privileging one form of religion with taxpayer dollars. Some also see potential political ramifications.

CCA provides for a variety of religious services in each facility, as required by law. But in addition, it has formed partnerships with eight national Evangelical Christian ministries under which CCA provides annual financial contributions and sets up franchise-style operations within facilities.

"We had chaplains and religious services, but I saw we didn't take full advantage of resources these

national ministries provided, and they were having [legal] difficulties in state and federal facilities," says Mr. Lanz. "As a private company, we could knock down the barriers."

Critics say those barriers shouldn't come down. Religious programming per se — which can benefit both prisoners and the prison environment — is not at issue, but showing preference for a particular religion is. The partnerships do that, they suggest, especially when they include residential "pods" where one faith message structures the living situation, and benefits are available that others don't get.

In a case unrelated to CCA, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State has challenged in court the Inner Change program run in an Iowa prison by Charles Colson's Prison Fellowship. Results of that trial are due any day.

CCA says funding groups using company profits makes it legal, but others argue that since CCA acts for the government in running facilities, it cannot support a particular religious message.

"In the corrections context, CCA would be treated as if it is a 'state actor,'" says Robert Tuttle, a law professor at George Washington University and an expert on faith-based program issues.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation of Madison, Wis., and its New Mexico members recently filed a federal lawsuit against the state and CCA over programming at the women's prison in Grants, N.M. FFRF says the Life Principles program in the "faith pod" there is fundamentalist Christian and teaches the women submission to male authority.

"This is a flagrant endorsement of religion," says Annie Gaylor, FFRF co-president. "We consider this a nationally significant lawsuit because they are the major private provider of prison services ... and have openly said they want to franchise this."

The company contends it's on safe ground because programs are voluntary and inmates don't have to convert; it developed a checklist for detention facilities to follow, which it says



will ensure they are meeting First Amendment requirements.

Ms. Gaylor disagrees: "They are being told that the only way they can be rehabilitated is through Jesus Christ, so it's a mind game even if they say you don't have to convert."

Volunteering in prison is a complicated question, Professor Tuttle says. Do some make choices they think officials or parole boards favor?

Studies don't support program effectiveness

Along with issues of taxpayer funding of a religious message, there are questions of religious programs' efficacy in prison. Todd Clear, a professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York, has conducted several evaluations. He says that empirical data have not shown a positive impact that can be traced to the programs themselves.

The studies show "fairly substantial differences in postrelease success of those involved and those not," he says, "but the differences disappear when you statistically control for the characteristics and background of the people."

Yet encouraged by Bush's faith-based initiative and by staff and inmate interest, CCA says that along with the vocational, educational, and antiaddiction programs offered, faith-based programs are crucial.

"While all programs are important, our company — and, hopefully, our nation — has recognized that

changing the hearts of people leads to larger change of attitudes and behavior," says Dennis Bradby, CCA's vice president for inmate programs.

At the Metro-Davidson detention facility in Nashville, Tenn., inmates can apply to live in separate residential communities some have dubbed "God pods," where life is highly structured.

Chaplain Dennis Smith coordinates one faith pod in which 41 inmates study two programs: Life Principles — a character-building curriculum based on fundamentalist biblical teachings developed by the Institute for Life Principles, in Oak Brook, Ill., (a group controversial even among evangelicals); and the Bible study course of School for Christ International, of Beaumont, Texas. Local volunteer teachers receive training by national ministries, which provide the materials.

At a pod session during a recent visit, inmates listen to a televangelist-style message on DVD by the ministry leader, focused on religious doctrine, and then volunteer Ray Vick leads a discussion.

"The fact that I'm saved means I'm special to the Lord. Do you consider yourself a miracle?" Mr. Vick asks. "If it wasn't for Jesus, we couldn't be saved and become a new creation."

One inmate raises the importance of forgiveness, and Vick talks about his experience of forgiving an absent father. In his second term at the jail, David Elmore signed up for the pod and considers it one of

his best decisions.

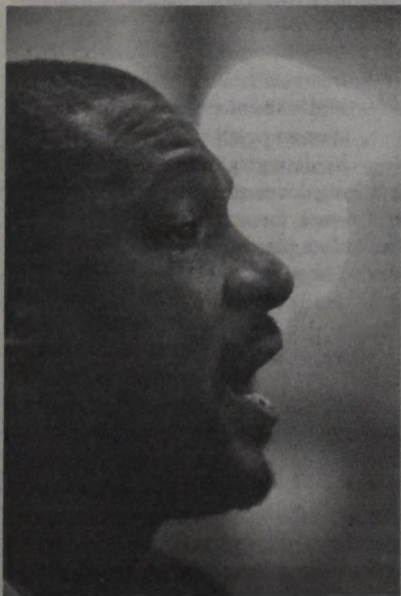
"The programs teach me that God is the head of my life whether I want him to be or not, and if I yield to that, my life will be better — and I'm seeing that," he says in an interview. "We do anger resolution, the commands of Christ, and 170 lessons with DVDs and a text on what's expected of you as a Christian."

Mr. Elmore, who worked for a concrete company, says he played hard and did what he wanted, including alcohol and drugs. A divorced father who left home when his daughter was four, he has also signed up with another of the ministries — Child Evangelism Fellowship — which encourages inmates to communicate with their children around Bible lessons.

"My daughter always wanted to know why I wasn't there," Elmore says. "She's 18, and this helps us build a relationship based on who we are now rather than on past mistakes."

Harold Harris, also a repeat offender, says, "Once you get into the program it will grab you. Doing time is hard.... This is the best place to be in the facility because there's more peace."

The other faith pod of 100 inmates is staffed directly by Men of Valor, a Nashville ministry founded by a former prisoner. It is committed to "winning men in prison to Jesus Christ and disciplining them" so they can "reenter society as men of integrity." The staff of five shepherds the men through a 12-month curriculum,



Environment



including goal setting and one-on-one mentoring by volunteers. The mentoring will continue for a year after the inmates' release, and includes support from a local church.

During the morning, the men spend time in group sessions on topics like marriage and family, financial management, and Christian qualities of manhood; an afternoon community meeting is for discussing issues and worship. Today, it's a rousing, high-energy event, with a cappella praise songs, clapping, and rap music with Christian lyrics written last night by "the Prayer Squad": "This is the new life/ set back wait I got something to tell/ remember my old life/ high speeding on my way to hell...."

Eugene Gregory used to write a different kind of rap music, but says "since I got in the program, it don't feel right" anymore. This is his fifth time in jail. He's only 25 and has five kids. Raised in a strict, churchgoing family, he got caught up in adventure, drugs, and the "Wild Boys" gang.

"I've learned something new every day – it's exciting," he says. Even if allowed out after a coming court date, he'd prefer "to leave a new man. I want to inspire somebody to wonder what happened to me."

Does it institutionalize Evangelical view?

Several in the pod say what's affected them most is the Bible study. "I used to read the Bible like any book, but they taught us to read one verse maybe a hundred times until you get the meaning," says Rodney Collier. "Now I know how to go to God."

Residential faith-based pods in prisons are a growing phenomenon in states, though controversial. Dr. Clear says Colson's Prison Fellow-

ship (PF) has reorganized its programs to focus on reentry into the community.

In addition to the eight Evangelical ministries already under agreement, CCA has just signed with PF for a reentry program in Indiana. It's also developing a partnership with megachurch pastor Rick Warren's prison ministry.

Overall, "we're about 40-50 percent there in implementing these programs," Lanz says.

The all-out emphasis on Evangelical groups, including some fundamentalist ones, appears to involve deals with preferred religious groups for any structured programs beyond simple church services, raising questions about the choice inmates have. Some county jails are taking similar steps.

"This is now a systematic attempt by folks on the prison and Evangelical side to move this vision of evangelical transformation as a core part of what it means to prepare prisoners for reentry," Tuttle says.

Dr. Clear is also skeptical. "The potential downsides of a partisan, Evangelical alliance with a profit-making prison industry are alarming," he says.

Yet he is strongly in favor of religious programming that offers real choice and is widely available. Prisoners are positive about programs because they ameliorate the strains of being locked up, he says.

The challenge for those in the corrections business is to find the right constitutional mix of programs that allow prisoners free religious expression and a choice of opportunities for rehabilitation.

Jane Lampman is a writer of *The Christian Science Monitor*

The paradox of the Promised Land

The illusion of the oil sands milk and honey

John Hiemstra

Our political and cultural leaders believe that oil sands developments are transforming Alberta into the "Promised Land."

Huge investments in the oil sands are converting Alberta into a land of milk and honey. Companies and investors are swimming in profits, workers enjoy record incomes, and sovereign consumers – at least those with the power to register demand in the market – are served with an over-abundance of consumer products.

A plague of paradoxes

All is not well in the Promised Land, however. Studies show it takes 25 calories of natural gas to produce 100 calories of synthetic crude oil. That does not count the energy needed to refine final products and ship them around the world. According to any sensible view of "economic," extracting energy from the oil sands in this way is highly questionable. Wouldn't it make better sense to use revenues gained from selling the original 25 calories of natural gas to subsidize energy conservation projects and reduce demand?



Giant dragline used to mine tarsands

The irony deepens when we factor in the extraordinary environmental impacts of oil sands development. They cause high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, significant surface land disturbance, high levels of air contaminants (including acid rain), not to mention rapidly exhausting non-renewable resources (natural gas and eventually oil sands).

Adding enigma to paradox, Albertans allow billions of dollars to be wildly invested into oil sands projects, only to have these non-renewable resources shipped south of the border to power

SUVs, heat oversized homes, and produce goods for highly wasteful consumer lifestyles.

Contradictions pile up even higher. A 2005 Pembina Institute study shows that the policies of both our national and provincial governments actually encourage the rapid development of the oil sands. They offer massive subsidies to the oil sands projects through low taxation, low royalty rates, and support for research and development.

Shockingly, "free-market" Albertans sit by while their government subsidizes industry. In 1996 the Alberta government set in place a generic royalty regime for projects developing the oil sands. Under this policy, an *Edmonton Journal* editorial reports, "companies pay only one per cent royalty on new projects until the capital costs are paid off. At that point, the royalty rate bounces up to the standard 25 percent of revenues." Thus, the current provincial oil sands royalty scheme has the people of Alberta – the owners of this resource – paying off the initial oil sands capital investments of large corporations.

happiness for all. Just stay the course, they promise, and serious paradoxes emerging from oil sands developments can be fixed along the way. All we need are technical adjustments to governmental fiscal policy, environmental regulations or economic practices.

The paradoxes of oil sand development, however, have become so great that they now resist all technical fixes and cry out for more basic solutions. Many Albertans miss these paradoxes because we are hypnotized by the myth of progress. We are so obsessed with economic growth and narrow-minded consumerism that we willingly overlook obvious "signs of the times."

Begin with core values

Albertans need to be awakened from this self-imposed hypnosis. Not surprisingly, talk of faith, myth, and signs of the times urges us to consider faith-based approaches to awakening.

The seeds for a major cultural reversal can be found in Jesus' message in Matthew 6:32-34. Instead of "worrying about what we will eat, drink and wear" so we can guarantee ourselves a Promised Land of happiness, Jesus reverses the order, suggesting we "seek first the Kingdom of God and all of these things will be added to you as well." At heart, this reversal asks us to stop asking idols like mammon and technology to deliver to us prosperity and joy. It invites us to live in expectation and trust of God, the giver of all good things.

What this reversal means in the case of Alberta's oil sands, I believe, is that we stop obsessing over securing ultimate happiness for ourselves. Practically, we need to move norms and values up from being mere afterthoughts in social and economic development to starting points. Only when we start by doing right, that is, by designing developments from the start to work for environmental stewardship, just wages, social solidarity, fair profits, necessary products, energy conservation, and so on, will the paradoxes plaguing our Promised Land begin to recede.

Dr. John Hiemstra is professor of political science at The King's University College in Edmonton and a national board member of Citizens for Public Justice (www.cpj.ca).

Deeper than oil sands

Have you ever seen such a bundle of puzzling contradictions? It's like a cancerous growth that we feel obliged to keep feeding rather than fighting. Paradoxes of this nature and intensity should drive us to reflect on the deeper roots of oil sands development and our larger culture.

So, what does the "promise" in Promised Land mean?

Our political and cultural leaders keep telling us that faith in unbridled economic growth will produce material prosperity and

Nature

Sentimentality, sparrows, and ...

Curt Gesch

*How lovely is your dwelling place,
O LORD Almighty!
My soul yearns, even faints,
for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and my flesh cry out
for the living God.
Even the sparrow has found a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may have her young—
a place near your altar,
O LORD Almighty, my King and my God.
Blessed are those who dwell in your house;
they are ever praising you.*



Quite a few years ago I wrote an article based on Psalm 84:1-4 for a Christian school newsletter. As I recall, the point was something like this: the psalmist earnestly desires to be in God's presence all the time, preferring to flick around the smelly altars and blood-drenched bowls in bird form to dwelling as a human being somewhere in heathen country.

Then I went on to expostulate about the changes that occurred when our LORD completed his work on earth, when the veil was torn, when the Holy Spirit made his home in God's people wherever they exist, not only in one building located on one former threshing floor, in one city, one holy land.

After this, I went on to point out how swallows were apparently welcomed in the temple area, but not in our neatnik modern homes. "Why," I righteously thundered, "do Christians recite Psalm 84 on Sunday and use the broom to thwart barn swallow nesting attempts in their garages and porches?"

I must have thundered a little too portentously because my friend Frank de Vries (also a sometime *Christian Courier* writer) called me to tell me that I was a "romanticist idealist" and should read the Apocrypha. When I objected that I didn't know where to look, Frank then referred me to Tobit 2:9-10:

That night, after bathing myself, I went into my courtyard and lay down to sleep by the courtyard wall, leaving my face uncovered because of the heat. I did not know that there were sparrows in the wall above me, and their droppings fell, still warm, right into my eyes and produced white patches. I went to the doctors to be cured, but the more they treat me with their ointments, the more my eyes became blinded by the white patches, until I lost my sight. I was blind for four years; my kinsmen all grieved for me.... (REV).

Blinded by sparrows. So much for "romanticist idealism." The sparrows which blinded Tobit were most likely the same bird that we, in North America, call "house sparrows." They were brought to the New World by New Yorkers, probably from Brooklyn, with the elimination of a plague of "green worms" in Central Park the ostensible

reason for the importation.

Before reaching North America, these members of the weaver finch family apparently spread from Asia, North Africa, the Middle East and the Mediterranean to Europe, including the British Isles. Other members of the weaver finch family make large woven basket nests and nest in colonies. European farms with thatched roofs and waste grain were sparrow heaven. "The grass is all here for us right on the roof!" So all they had to do was burrow into the thatch and create a nesting chamber, according to some speculative bird-historians.

The human nest-providers also provided all sorts of waste grain (sometimes found undigested in horse buns), weed seeds from messy gardens, and garbage. So the weavers finches, now called sparrows (to the insult of an unrelated family of birds) decided to forsake the wild and live with humans.

If the bird scientists are right, these house sparrows soon changed their habits a bit: instead of making huge, hanging nests, they simply jammed hollow trees, tubes, pipes, holes in walls, and any other cavities they might find with grass, left a nesting chamber and entrance, and called it home.

When they arrived in New York, they saw the leftover oats from horse nose-bags and droppings, found all sorts of man-made cavities and reproduced like rabbits (in numbers, not technique). Encountering native birds of a shyer disposition, they simply attacked and drove them out of town. (There seems to be some sort of allegory going on here, but — I assure you — it is entirely unintentional.)

Before too long the house sparrows had spread throughout North America, thriving wherever their human hosts provided farms, towns, cities or shopping centres. Along the way, they devastated local populations of native cavity nesters like tree swallows, violet green swallows, purple martins, and the three types of North American bluebirds — gentle souls all. Finding a cavity already occupied, the male sparrow drives out or kills the brooding adult, breaks eggs, kills young, and begins a monotonous chirping call for a female sparrow, who builds her nest right on top of the remains.

So, while these sparrows may have found a place in Israel's temple, they have found no ease around bluebird or purple martin fanciers, to name but a few. When I was child, we were armed with BB guns and told to "search and destroy," without a great deal of success. We regularly cleaned out nests of house sparrows that we found in our purple martin "apartment houses" and other bird houses.

Occasionally, we even shot at them with a 20 gauge shotgun out of the back door of the house.

When my father moved to a new subdivision and an inconsiderate village board put a street and more houses between Dad's martin house and the corn field, he had to move to less noisy methods of sparrow control. Now he uses live traps for sparrows. One type — promoted by the American Bluebird Association — is a house made by a judas: when the bluebird male hops in for an inspection he trips a little lever that locks him in. Another type uses bait to catch mostly the young and foolish sparrows. When Dad finds a sparrow in his trap he quietly removes the bird and gently wrings its neck.

"But Wilfred," friends sometimes object, "don't you remember that God sees the little sparrow fall?"

"Yup," Dad replies, "and he just saw number 42 fall this year. Without me doing this, there wouldn't be tree swallows, martins, and bluebirds in this yard."

So... No sentimentality about sparrows, but the swallows: ah! The swallows. Swallows belong on every yard, every deck, garage, porch, apartment block and sky scraper. Sure, they leave gobbets of mud and "whitewash" on the screens, but swallows — barn swallows, cliff swallows, any kind of swallows — deserve a home wherever people live, wherever West-Nile-virus-carrying mosquitos flourish. Swallows make for "romanticist idealists."

Swallows belong wherever holy places exist.

Like heaven brought down

Ted Kooser, US poet laureate

Many of you have seen flocks of birds or schools of minnows acting as if they were guided by a common intelligence, turning together, stopping together. Here is a poem by Debra Nystrom that beautifully describes a flight of swallows returning to their nests, acting as if they were of one mind. Notice how she extends the description to comment on the way human behavior differs from that of the birds.

*Is it some turn of wind
that funnels them all down at once, or
is it their own voices netting
to bring them in — the roll and churr
of hundreds searing through river light
and cliff dust, each to its precise
mud nest on the face —
none of our own isolate
groping, wishing need could be sent
so unerringly to solace. But
this silk-skein flashing is like heaven
brought down: not to meet ground
or water — to enter
the riven earth and disappear.*

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Other lands

The world according to "Jackie Chan"

This past winter I had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to take a holiday with my two daughters, Stephanie and Jessica. Jack couldn't take a week away from the farm because of a major renovation project, but when our girls were planning a trip to the Dominican Republic, he suggested I go with them. I couldn't imagine going without him. Well, at least until I found out they didn't mind me tagging along.

We spent most of our days loafing in the sunshine of Bavaro but took one excursion outside the haven of our resort. The truck was supposed to leave our hotel at 8:30 a.m. In typical Dominican style, it was nearly 9:00 by the time we saw the black and white safari truck pull up in front of the lobby.

Our tour guide was a wiry young black, with a ready smile and a definite light in his eyes. His rapid fire English was good, despite a fairly strong accent. He introduced himself as "Jackie Chan," assuring us that would be far more memorable than his real name. Our driver, a tall Hispanic who spoke very little English, was "Steven Segal." About sixteen of us piled into the back of the open-sided truck and crammed onto the benches lining either side of the box.

Jackie took his perch at the back of the truck and encouraged us to ask questions anytime, then said, "And here's a question for you - do you think the Dominican people are 'happy'? We'll see how you answer that at the end of the day."

His mission was to educate us about "real life" in the Dominican. He lifted the lid of a large picnic cooler to reveal a chest full of beer, rum, pop and water. "We gonna have a good time today," he said, rubbing his hands together.

At which point Steven Segal put the noisy diesel into gear and we lurched into our adventure. Jackie chattered happily as we traveled, pointing out interesting sites, including some of the damage done by the previous hurricane season.

The man sitting next to me was from South Carolina. He told me how they had been cut off from their town by flood waters for several days in the wake of Katrina.

"Sounds scary," I said.

"Naw," he answered, "It's really just a very windy rainstorm. We lost hydro for a few hours, but we live on the same road as the governor, so power was restored PDQ, if you know what I mean."

We rumbled past a row of ramshackle houses. "Then again," he added, "If you were sitting in one of those, I guess it would be a different story."

We learned that Jackie is a university student, and one of sixteen children in his family. His father is married to his mother and has six children with her. "Plus he has two concubines who have five children each."

He scanned the white faces around him for a reaction. There were a couple of polite gasps and a quiet whistle. (I was just amazed that he used the word "concubine"

in casual conversation.) Jackie shrugged his shoulders and said, "That's how it's done in Dominican. Less than five percent of the population is legally married. Would anybody like a beer?"

We drove up into the hill country. The smell of rotting garbage wafted in on the breeze.

"Do you smell that?" asked Jackie.

As if we could miss it. "You know all that food you don't eat at your resort?" He continued, "Well, this is where it goes." He pointed to a landfill site.

"But don't worry. It's not wasted. Lots of poor people come to the dump every day to find their food."

Awhile later he asked, "And why do you think a woman would be willing to be somebody's concubine when everybody is poor and it's so hard to provide for a family?"

We had no answer, but Jackie did. "Because we have no pension plan," he said, "And when you get old you need somebody to look after you. That's why you have to have children, even if you can't have a husband of your own."

He told us of the desperate poverty many people live in and how some have sold their own children into prostitution.

"But most people love their kids," he explained, "And they find a way to make a living - one day at a time."

As we approached a mountain village, he warned us not to throw candy or money from the truck for the children because they would rush right into traffic to pick it up. He pointed to some scars on his skinny arms, "I know. I used to do the same thing."

We rounded a curve and a dozen kids swarmed the truck waving and yelling, "Jackie! Jackie!" He grinned and told us, "When they are eighteen I'm going to run for president and they will for sure elect me."

A few minutes later he explained that the kids don't eat the candy they're given. They



Workers roll cigars by hand at the cigar factory

save it up until they have a good pile and then they sell it to the local store so they can contribute the money to their family.

"And then," he said with a laugh, "the tourists come along and buy the candy from the store to give it to the children."

We visited a cigar factory, a sugar cane plantation, and a working farm where we could see how coffee beans and cocoa are harvested and processed.

We witnessed a demonstration cockfight, the Dominican "national sport." Both participants had their spurs covered, so no blood was shed.

Jackie told us about the climate, economy and social practices of Dominican. One of our last stops was a farm where twenty-five children live with their grandma and grandpa while their parents work in the city and send money home. A lady from West Virginia pulled out a bag of candy the size of a pillowcase. Jackie handed out the treats to the kids. Not one child unwrapped a single

candy. The grandma smiled at us. A thin lady with a broad streak of gray running through her jet black hair, she waved a bony hand as we left, and I realized that she's probably younger than I am.

As we headed home, I asked Jackie what he was studying. "Medicine," he said, and his expression grew serious. "My parents think I'm strange to be twenty-seven and have no wife or children. But I want to be a doctor and help the people I see every day. I want to prove to my father there's a better way."

Early the next morning I sat on the balcony reading my Bible. I came across Numbers 11:1, "Now when the people complained it displeased the Lord." I thought about the cold weather we were coming home to, and about the things I complain about now and then. I considered the world that Jackie Chan lives in and smiled at his determination to make a difference. His question came to mind, "Do you think the Dominican people are 'happy'?"

Compared to North Americans, their struggles are much more life and death. But are they happy? I'd have to guess that some are, while others are not. What makes the difference isn't circumstances, but attitude.

I hope that doesn't sound arrogant. People who cope with daily poverty are to be admired when they can rise above it and find happiness. I need to take a lesson from them. As a believer I'm called to be compassionate and generous toward those in need. I'll bear in mind 1 Timothy 6:6, "But godliness with contentment is great gain." And like Jackie, I'll try to make a difference in this world while longing for a better one.

Heidi VanderSlikke
lives in Harriston, Ont.
Her email: huvanderslikke@hotmail.com



Bavaro Beach

Ecclesiastes

Why is life so confused?

This only have I found: God made mankind upright,

but men have gone in search of many schemes. Ecclesiastes 7:29

A. A. van Ruler

The Preacher's basic theme is that he can find no wisdom in human life. It is far too complex and confused. It is beyond the reach of human thought; it is unfathomable. He can find no meaning in it, which is to say, all human effort seems to produce no positive and enduring results. Everything is helter-skelter and topsy-turvy, with one thing canceling out another. Human life is subject to endless futility.

In this text the Preacher makes a very important revision to this fundamental theme. He adds that the confusion in human existence and the resulting futility are caused by mankind's many schemes. For God made mankind upright.

This is a basic truth that we must hold onto no matter what. It is a truth given by faith. We cannot prove it or confirm it. On the contrary, our daily experience tells us the very opposite. Mankind seems to have been created not upright but crooked; it looks as if mankind was created in vain.

But there are two things that contradict this conclusion and experience. First, the human heart, which cries out for goodness, happiness and joy. The human heart can never surrender to the idea that everything is evil and that human existence is nothing but suffering from beginning to end.

The voice of conscience supports what the heart tells us. It is even more insistent. It loudly proclaims that the evils of human life are our own fault. In our conscience we accuse ourselves; it knows of an original goodness.

The testimony of heart and conscience became a fundamental and unshakable matter of faith for Israel. This world is God's creation, the work of his hands, and therefore it is fundamentally – that is, originally and ultimately – wholly good. God saw all that he had made and said that it was very good. So he also made mankind upright.

Part of this goodness and uprightness is that mankind and the world be transparent to their very bedrock, that there be no darkness or confusion in them. We human beings ought to be able to make sense of them. We ought to be able to understand ourselves, life and the world, and to affirm them.

This belief in creation is one of the great things humanity owes to Israel. The Bible does not just give us knowledge of Jesus Christ and of God's grace; even more fundamental is this knowledge that the world is God's creation and therefore good.

But, as I said, it is a matter of faith; it cannot be proved. It is not, or hardly, based on experience. It comes from the voice we hear in our heart and conscience.

And it is derived from God's revelation to Israel and in Christ. But as a matter of faith, there is nothing we must hold onto more passionately. It echoes through the dark book of Ecclesiastes like a cry of triumph: I have seen that God created mankind upright!

The reason life is confused and opaque and therefore beyond our ken and unfathomable cannot be traced back to God. At its deepest point, being is not tragic. Its unfathomableness is not fate. It can be traced to mankind and to his schemes.

The human capacity for scheming is an amazing power. It involves a lot of creativity; we are able to conjure something into being. It involves our imaginations. Our ability to think. Our desiring. And our willing. We create for ourselves images of genuine happiness that we weave into the reality of created being. And it is this that makes everything so hopelessly complex and confused. God and his creation are simple and clear. But man is complex and dark, or at any rate this is what he makes of himself and of the world.

It is no coincidence that the Preacher talks about the enormous power of human sexuality in this connection. In verse 26 he speaks of the woman who is a snare and of the man who is ensnared, and he calls it "more bitter than death."

Death is a bitter reality – an abyss that swallows all of life. But sexual temptation is even more bitter. It too is an abyss into which we may fall. When we do, we find it an abyss of confusion and contradictions. Death in comparison looks simple and clear.

Death is an abyss of rest. Sexual temptation an abyss of restlessness. The temptress is a snare, her heart is a net and her hand chains. And there is no man who can resist her – unless he be spared by God.

Why does the Preacher focus especially on sexuality? I suspect that it is because here the creativity of mankind most comes to the fore. It is here that human scheming especially comes into play.

On the one hand, there is the good: sexuality endows life with intensity, color and passion. It brings forth new life. Children are, as it were, schemes of a man and wife at the climax of their creaturely existence.

On the other hand, there is the bad: sexuality drives us to pursue the many phantasms of happiness that life has to offer like a fool with a butterfly net. It sends us on all sorts of false quests, and it causes us to keep inventing new schemes. We invent all sorts of lies, and our hearts are filled with all sorts of folly and bitterness, rage and murder.



Self portrait with death by Arnold Böcklin

At last we can no longer make sense of our own hearts. Life becomes totally opaque and meaningless. We can be destroyed by our own sexuality.

This is, of course, true not just of sexuality. Sexuality – perverted sexuality – serves here as the core and the symbol of the radical corruption of human nature. We scheme on numerous levels: besides sexuality, there are possessions, power and pleasure. Even our knowledge and our play, and thus our science and art, partici-

pate in this corruption. Even religion can become totally corrupt: the cries of the heart and conscience can ring false notes.

The only clarity amidst all this corruption is the knowledge that it is all the product of human scheming. Therefore it is our fault and must be acknowledged and confessed as such. And secondly, the knowledge that in spite of everything, existence is not evil, but, thanks be to God, it is good and it will always be good.

Tips for a Happier Marriage

Think about what is in the other person's interest. The loving person wants the good of the other person and is willing to follow through with actions.

Many disappointments in married life can be traced to one basic misunderstanding: we think love is a feeling. We think we are "in love" when we like the way we feel with the other person. But timeless wisdom shows that love is more than a feeling. Love is a decision. You can improve your marriage by making a decision to love. In fact, you can improve the lives of many people by making the decision to do what is in their interest, even if it is inconvenient for you at the time.

You can obtain a copy of *101 Tips for a Happier Marriage*, by going to Dr. Jennifer Roback Morse's website: www.jennifer_robuck_morse.com

People

People used by God: John T. J. Dekker



John and Helen Dekker

Richard Oostra

John Dekker emigrated to Hamilton, Ontario in 1952, much to his father's disappointment who wanted his son in his curtain business in The Hague. But John was restless and was looking for meaning and purpose in life, which he wasn't able to find in Holland.

Even after moving to Canada, his restlessness remained and traveling across the country with a friend, the question that kept coming to his mind, and which they both pondered, was: "What should I do with my life?"

They ended up working at a sawmill on Vancouver Island.

Here they met a Christian man by the name of Ben Wiebe, who confronted them with that same question. They knew that only through Jesus Christ could people be restored to fellowship with God. They also knew that there were millions of people who had never had a chance to hear the good news. John knew he had some responsibility.

Ben recommended that he consider Bible school and even offered to pay for his first semester of schooling. John became convinced that this was exactly what he should do, and three weeks later he arrived at a Bible school on the prairies.

Far away from home and living in a total new environment, John was learning things about the Christian life he had never understood, but realizing that God had a plan for his life he poured himself into his studies.

During a mission conference week he learned about many unreached tribes living in what was then "Dutch New Guinea." (now West Papua). New tribes had been discovered at the end of WW II when Allied planes flew over this island searching for Japanese invaders. They found stone-age people that had never been in touch with civilization and who still practised cannibalism.

When he contacted his CRC church, he found out that they didn't have any mission work in that part of the world. This led him to an interdenominational mission agency that had just begun sending people to the island. They encouraged him not only to finish Bible school but also to take some

additional training in tropical medicine in order to help with basic illnesses, as well as linguistic training in order to quicker decipher new languages and put these into writing.

Now highly motivated, John rapidly underwent the required training.

In the meantime, however, God had one more provision for John, who in his life never paid much attention to girls.

A young lady by the name of Helen Clowes, who had her nurse's training felt also led by God's spirit to become a missionary. She was in John's linguistic class. In an extra-ordinary way God brought the two together and a year later they were married. After spending some time raising their support and after awaiting the arrival of their first son, the couple was off to the field to which they had been called.

It was a small Mission Aviation aircraft that brought them to West Papua's most interior jungles. This area, called the Toli region, had dozens of unreached clans of the Dani people. Several missionaries of the mission agency had already, at high risk, started work in the Toli area, befriended some of the natives and built two primitive houses and an airstrip. John and his family landed on this airstrip, and after a short time they trekked on to a new area, where they pioneered among the Dani population of the head waters of the Toli river.

John's first assignment was to develop a relationship with the natives, learn their language and way of life, and begin the much-needed medical work. These were primitive, stone-age people, most of whom had never seen white people before. The men, being warriors, were always at war with other clans and everyone lived in constant fear of evil spirits.

The first few months John and Helen lived in uncertainty of their lives and were constantly surrounded by curious natives. John, in the meantime, began recruiting men to help him build an airstrip, finish a primitive house and start a vegetable garden. He paid them with things they wanted: salt, soap, steel knives, axes, etc. — things they had never had before.

As the language barrier was gradually overcome, he began teaching the Danis things they were eager to learn — things like better health and hygiene, creation and the existence of God. Gradually he turned to the Bible stories, stories that had to be told in the context of the Dani culture. What John taught in the morning the Danis would excitedly rehearse and discuss with others around their fires that same evening.

In their work the Dekkers realized that the Spirit of God had prepared these people to hear, listen and believe. As the people went to other villages to tell about God, groups of believers gradually became established

throughout the area. Five years after their arrival, 20 churches had been formed, and it became necessary for John to appoint and train elders as leaders for these new churches.

Another large native hut was erected which served as a school for the new church leaders. As the Dani language was put into writing, the New Testament books gradually became available to them.

John also translated the catechism to help him to teach Bible doctrines. What amazed him over and over again was the high I.Q. these natives had, and a special ability to memorize whole portions of the Bible, especially the Bible stories.

John taught each morning four times a week, and on the weekends the new believers would go out and share the story of redemption with villages near and far. His method was networking. Instead of seeking rapid conversions, he preferred to see the people grow into faith and gradually break away from their superstitious past. Walking as new believers in the light for 6-12 months was one prerequisite for baptism.

Baptisms were done in ponds and rivers. Because of the required waiting period, it was not uncommon to see 30-60 people being baptized at once. What began to hasten the spread of the gospel was the sense of God's presence and the divine answers to prayer for the sick. John, a conservative Reformed person and not at all a charismatic, would often stand in awe as to what miraculous things God was doing for the breakthrough of the gospel.

Many denominations tried to take control of these churches, but John was careful not to see "new wine poured into old wineskins" and to keep these churches indigenous. They worshiped and sang in their own native style, developed their own preachers and used no foreign funds to develop their churches. Pastors were supported with food and clothing by their own people. John taught them to grow new crops that later could be sold, to live healthier and more hygienic lifestyles and to become more self-sufficient in all their needs.

The three-year Bible school soon started producing spiritual leaders such as elders, pastors, teachers and evangelists. In the past women had maintained the crop gar-



A chief of Dani Tribe demonstrates making fire in the traditional way.

dens while the men waged wars, prepared the soil for planting and built the huts and fences. Now, with the end of the wars, the men became available for ministry as well as building better trails and homes for their families.

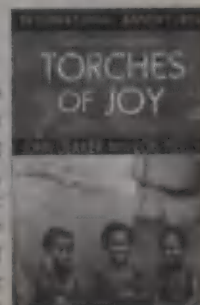
By the time John and Helen neared their 22nd year of work among the Dani people, 79 self-supporting churches had been established with over 13,000 new believers. The indigenous churches were sending some 60 of their own missionary couples to 20 different tribes — all supported by the Dani churches themselves.

John and Helen felt that the work God had given them to do was accomplished and it was time to move on. God had given John a new burden — to train and encourage national churches around the world to send out their own missionaries to unreached people around them, just as the Dani Christians had done. At the same time, the Dekker children had reached the age where they had to go on for higher education, and so the family moved back to North America.

And what has my friend John done since his return?

He has completed two degrees in missiology, published a book, and every year he goes back to visit the Dani church. He also offers seminars to national mission agencies around the world to help the nationals to send their own missionaries to unreached people in their own and neighboring countries.

For more info about the Dekkers and their amazing story of sacrifice, faith and victory read: *Torches of Joy* by John Dekker, ISBN 0-927545-43-8 or contact the Dekkers at: tolibaga@montrose.net



Women

Women who shoulder the world's burdens with grace



A displaced Sudanese woman

G. Jefferson Price III

BALTIMORE — On a blistering day last summer, in the Kawa Fako community of Niger, where people were starving to death, an important man dressed in billowing blue robes and an Arab headdress stood before a crowd of people waiting for food and said: "Make sure the women take the food."

The women! I thought. They are not usually even allowed out of the house in the daytime, though on this day they were all out, dressed in marvelously colored clothing, some struggling in the shadows of the trees to suckle their emaciated infants.

The men of the community were all lined up, waiting to take the emergency food supplies that had been brought to the village by Catholic Relief Services (CRS), a humanitarian relief agency based in the United States.

"If the men keep it," someone explained, "all the food would not get to the families. Too much of it would be bartered for other things the men want, like beer."

There are many good men in places like Kawa Fako, where during chronic droughts people barely survive on weeds and berries until aid organizations like CRS arrive to offer food and supplies.

In the world's harshest places, men struggle, as women do, to help their families survive. But the heaviest burdens often fall on the women, whose children are with them throughout the day as they work in the fields or do domestic chores.

CRS, the relief and development agency of the US Catholic community, is only one of the scores of United Nations, government, and nongovernmental organizations striving around the world to bring food and other means of support to the world's most vulnerable people. Among others working with equal diligence are CARE, the International Red Cross, Oxfam, and World Vision.

But CRS is the agency I've spent most of the past year with. It is the organization that

brought me face to face with the women who toil with extraordinary grace and dignity — even a sense of humor — in circumstances of unimaginable hardship.

In Kawa Fako that hot August day, I met Binta Amadou, a mother of three children, one a hungry infant named Hayizu struggling to get milk from his mother's breast. "I have not much milk," she told me with the help of an interpreter.

"We had anza but now there is no anza," she said matter-of-factly about the bitter pea-sized berry that grows on desert bushes. It is softened and boiled into a bitter broth, often the only sustenance in a land chronically devastated by drought. In Niger, one of every four children dies before the age of five — the second-highest mortality rate for young children in the world.

Binta Amadou's day starts early. She rises at dawn to cook whatever she has, awakens the children, and washes them with water that is brought to their small hut from a nearby well. She helps her husband prepare for his day and then she forages for whatever food she can find to cook. When there was no more anza, she said, "we boiled leaves from trees and weeds."

In these circumstances, one would expect cries of bitterness or the groan of despair. But here, the women of Kawa Fako are serene and smiling, awaiting their delivered bounty: 220 pounds of millet, 33 pounds of beans, three gallons of cooking oil.

"Tonight we will have a feast," Binta Amadou said, laughing. "then we will save the food to last us for the next 40 days."

My travels over the past year have brought me to many women like Binta Amadou. I have met them in remote villages of Angola and Madagascar, on the sunbaked reaches of desert in Darfur, Sudan, where they have fled marauding militiamen who murder and rape and plunder. They exist in

northern Uganda, where antigovernment rebels kidnap children and force them to become murderers and sex slaves. I have met them in the remote villages of India, where some 300 million people live below the one dollar-a-day poverty line. And I have met them in places closer to home, like Haiti, the poorest land in the Western hemisphere, and in Colombia, a country also struggling with decades of conflict.

There is no hall of fame for these women. But in the lands they inhabit, these women are the indispensable backbone of society, the glue holding their families together.

In Madagascar, Mariam Sese, a mother of seven, lives in a small settlement of huts in a jungle clearing. She rises at four in the morning and makes a meager breakfast for her family. Then she goes to work on a small plot of land where she and her husband are trying to grow some things to eat. She does this work with her hands and a simple hoe. At 10 a.m. she returns and makes a meal for her children. Then she goes back to work in the field. There is no sanitation in the village, so she goes to the river to wash her cooking utensils, to bathe herself and her children, and to fetch drinking water.

Mariam Sese does this every day of the week, every week of the year.

What did she think of all this? She smiled. "I am happy. I have children. I love my family. I wish we had a well."

In Darfur, 200,000 people have been killed in a civil war between government-supported militias and local rebels, and two million more have been driven from their homes. Here Miriam Adam, a mother of two, waited patiently for a food distribution. Her village had been attacked in October 2003 by marauding militiamen. "They took everything, even our clothes."

At the time she was living in one of the camps for displaced people. What did she need? "I need food for my family," she said. "I need grass." Grass? "Grass to build a home, there is no grass now," she said, looking out at the barren desert. She might have asked for revenge, but she did not.

The women who help the poor and hungry are just as tireless.

In Gulu, Uganda, there is Sister Pauline Acayo, a nun who runs a peacebuilding project for CRS. This project helps in the repatriation and forgiveness process for former child soldiers.

Despite the atrocious stories of murder and hideous crime she has heard from these returnees, Sister Pauline beams with pleasure at the successes. "These are our children," Sister Pauline said with a smile. "They need to be forgiven and restored to their communities. There is no other way."

From India, the faces of many women come to mind. One is that of Sunitha Krishnan, a tiny woman who has made her life's work the rescue and rehabilitation of girls abducted or sold into the sex trade, some-

times as young as three and four.

Ms. Krishnan leads a program in Hyderabad, India, named Prajwala — eternal flame. Prajwala rescues, educates, and provides homes for thousands of girls of all ages who have been hideously abused, left with emotional scars and often diseases, including AIDS.

Despite her tiny size, Krishnan has stood up to the underworld gangs that profit from the sex trade and to corrupt officials who enable the trade to flourish.

The faces of the youngest who have been helped by Prajwala were so innocent-looking it tore my heart apart to know of the abuse and disease they had endured.

One who was nine had been rescued when she was six. She had been gang-raped by her abductors and injured so badly it took hours of reconstructive surgery to restore her body.



This girl, who seemed as joyful as one would expect of a child her age, was an extraordinary hero. Rapists are rarely caught and brought to trial in such cases, but they were in this case. The girl, by then seven, testified personally against the men who had ravaged her. The girl's strength in confronting her tormentors in court so impressed a local official, he offered to adopt her. To which the girl replied: "I have a mother. Sunitha Krishnan is my mother. I have many sisters; they are with me in the Prajwala school. I have a home. That is Prajwala."

Across all of these stories rises a common theme: No matter how different their cultures and languages, how diverse the struggles of their lives — drought, war, natural or man-made disasters, crime, and abuse — in their vulnerability, their basic needs are the same. A woman devastated by war in Sudan has the same needs as the rescued girl in India: a safe home, food to eat, healthcare, education.

Everywhere, it seems, it is the women who are the most adamant keepers of those ambitions. Universally, they manage to go about this with grace, boldness, and even touches of humor in the most challenging circumstances.

G. Jefferson Price III is a former editor and foreign correspondent at The Baltimore Sun. He has spent the past year traveling around the world with Catholic Relief Services.

Self-reflections

Garden gifts

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

The opossum's belligerent stare warned me not to enter my garden. Busily nosing around in the discarded vegetable scraps in the compost hole, he had no intention of leaving his free lunch because the gardener wasn't welcoming him. My firm words – "Get out of there!" And "Shoo!" – had no effect on him.



I stepped forward. His cold, beady eyes warned me not to come closer.

I didn't. I retreated until he decided to leave. When he did, the garden territory was mine once again.

Or, was it?

Not really!

Even though I call it my garden and think that I'm its boss – except, of course, when small, fear-inducing animals keep me at bay! – I know that it's really God's garden, a gift from him that keeps on giving me gifts.

Garden gifts bring to mind flowers – hardy, pink echinacea; delicate, purple larkspur; huge, golden gloriosa daisies; and papery-petalled, orange oriental poppies; and, also, vegetables – glossy, green bell peppers; round, rosy-red tomatoes; orange, spiky carrots; and pungent green onions. Herbs like basil, mint, thyme, and sage round out the line-up. When I see these gifts, I declare with David, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (Psalm 24:1). All of it is his, including the flowers, vegetables, and herbs in the garden at 17 Logan Street in St. Catharines, Ontario where I live.

What other gifts does my garden give me besides these visible, tangible ones?

In *The Fragrance of God*, author Vigen Guroian says, "The garden is the ground of my humility, as the whole earth should be also. I did not create the butterfly or the spider; nor do I possess the beauty of the one or the skill of the other. They, along with the rest of the creation, declare a grander design and possess a value that is quite their own and not dependent upon me" (Eerdmans, 2006, pp. 28). My garden helps me to remember who I am.

I am not the Creator. I am a created one. I did not bring forth something from

nothing. I was brought forth by the hand of the Maker. I cannot make seeds germinate, buds form, or petals unfurl. I can only nurture the process along with the means and tools God has so graciously given to me – water, seeds, soil, compost, manure, shovel, hoe, and rake. When I comprehend these truths, I realize that my garden gives me the gift of humility.

Besides giving me that valuable present, my garden gives me the gift of remembering people whom I love. Nicola, the fool of Queen Mary of Scots in Robert Harris and Jane Yolen's novel, *Queen's Own Fool*, hopes that having a garden will do that for her. She says, "I had asked the queen for a bit of garden. 'My mother used to say that the seasons mean nothing without a bit of dirt beneath the nails,' I told her. What I didn't say was that I could no longer remember what my maman looked like. I thought that if I could make a garden, it would recall her to me" (Philomel Books, 2000, pp. 177).

Even if our gardens don't help us to remember exactly every physical feature of people we care about, they can help us remember happy times with people dear to us. When I pick my beans, I remember my dad and mom's vegetable garden when I was young, and the way they nurtured it, harvesting it for the benefit of our family and teaching me to value the earth. By the raspberry patch in my present day garden I remember how my young children and a neighbor boy picked raspberries and placed them like thimbles on all their fingers. By the butterfly bush, I remember my son and his fiancée, so much in love, standing by the bush and smelling its fragrant, purple plumes. By the miniature lilac bush, a gift for Rinke's and my twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, I remember that when I was planting it my dad phoned and we had a great talk. When I see the hardy stalks of the red beebalm, the orange-speckled tiger lilies, and the pink phlox, I remember how both my son, Benjamin, and Rinke graciously helped me several times throughout the years to spread manure over our various gardens.

My garden also gives me the gift of measuring – not measuring boundaries, size, distance between plants, and how my garden measures up to other people's gardens. Rather, it gives me the gift of measuring my days. Vigen Guroian writes, "I do not know of a better place to count the days or the seasons or to take measure of my life than in a garden" (*The Fragrance of God*, pp. 114). And neither do I. When I see the grass and flowers, vibrant and prolific one day, wilted and dying the next, I remember David's words, "As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more" (Psalm 103:15-16).

But I don't stop there, focusing my

A boomer in denial?

Characters cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial... can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.

Helen Keller

According to Shelley Fralic, columnist of *The Vancouver Sun*, I may be a boomer in denial. She writes "show me a man or woman over the age of 50 who wouldn't do it all over again – and much differently – and I'll show you a boomer in denial." She believes that most of us would kill for "another shot at our misspent youth, another crack at that parenting thing, another go at perfecting that marriage, friendship, job, hobby." As a result we lie awake at night constantly mulling the paths we took and questioning the decisions we made or did not make.

To move from the path of regret to the path of peace Shelley recommends the activity in the book *What I Know Now: Letters to My Younger Self* edited by Ellyn Spragins, in which well-known personalities such as Madeline Albright, Olympia Dukakis and Trisha Yearwood write letters to their younger selves asking the questions: what they wished they did differently, what they wished they knew then, what they know now and what advice they wished someone had given them. This simple process of revisiting our history reminds us that life is a learning experience and this helps us reconcile ourselves with the mistakes we made.

The column, in spite of its serious tone, made me chuckle. I appreciate the author's honesty and her surprise at how simple reconciliation with ourselves can be if we want to struggle with the above three questions. The crux is whether we can forgive ourselves for our shortcomings or for some of the more serious life failings.

At the same time, I sometimes wonder what we consider to be "mistakes." In our contemporary search for happiness we most often look for a life protected from bad feelings, free from pain and

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

confusion. When difficulties do come our way we see them as failures on our part. This view does us a huge disservice. The sooner we realize normal life is difficult the better we are able to function when the sky threatens to fall. Failure only becomes part of life when we refuse to work through the tough times. And yes, sometimes we are our own worst enemy and we do make mistakes but working through the issues allows us to become people of texture and depth.

In a recent *Psychology Today* the author of an article on "The hidden side of happiness" stresses that pleasure only gets us so far. A rich, rewarding life often requires a messy battle with adversity. And those who weather adversity well are living proof of one of the paradoxes of happiness – we need more than pleasure to live our best possible life!

My column began with Shelley's challenge: if I did not want another stab at life and do things much differently I am in denial. The reality is I would not mind having another stab at life (who wouldn't, knowing what we know now) but I do not lay awake at night agonizing over my failings and wishing I had done things much differently – even though I made plenty of mistakes.

What then, is the difference between Shelly and me? I could say my Christian experience of grace and redemption may be helping me out in this case, but I never was one for easy and comfortable Christianity. So, then what is going on here? I'm not sure, but my thinking is that it has something to do with how we view our lives as well as the lives of those we love especially in terms of the roles struggle and hope play in challenging us to become who we are meant to be.

Either that, or I am in denial.

Arlene Van Hove is a therapist and a member of the Fleetwood CRC. She can be reached at avanhove@shaw.ca



measuring on what may seem to be morbid thoughts. I try to grasp something else, something that is immeasurable – God's love. In the same Psalm David adds, "But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him..." (Psalm 103: 17a).

David's words ring especially clearly and poignantly for me as I remember working in my garden one afternoon, turning over cold, black soil. My daughter, Tamara, came to me, her arms outstretched, her face twisted in grief, as she blurted out, first incoherently, then clearly, that a young man we knew had just been killed in a tragic accident. Shocked, I dropped my shovel and

my gloves, and hugged her. Like the fragile flowers in my garden, this young man's life had ended. But I knew, even as days later our community stood by his grave – emptied of cold, black soil – that Jesus' words also applied to him: "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day" (John 6:39).

With gratitude to the chief gardener, my Father in heaven, I accept these three garden gifts – humility, remembering loved ones, and measuring my days – and I anticipate discovering more garden gifts this summer.

Reflections

From the 11th Province

Marian Van Til

The LORD is risen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Those thrilling words are the opening exchange between pastor/priest and congregation in many Christian churches on Easter morning. Whether "Easter morning" means just after midnight (the Easter Vigil), or sunrise, or the more ordinary time of weekly worship, the significance of those joyously exclaimed words is the same.

The Apostle Paul in I Corinthians spends all of Chapter 15 talking about the Resurrection – the resurrection of the body – Christ's and ours. Paul emphasizes that if Christ had not been raised, then our faith would be useless (or is it a warning?: *You'd better believe it! – or why bother?*). Paul says (and mentally I always hear it sung as Handel set the King James Version of it in *Messiah*), "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive" (15:21-22).

Nevertheless, the Resurrection is a stumbling block for some people. Or, apparently, for many people, even for many Christians. I'm the music director at a Lutheran church which held a soup supper and Evensong on each of the five Thursday nights in Lent. At one of those suppers, the conversation at my table meandered, as happens at such affairs. A couple of people happened to mention several former members. A woman who was to have been on the committee to call a new pastor (the pastor who is now there) was replaced by her husband, the lady sitting across from me told me. That man had simply announced that his wife wasn't available and that he was going to take her place. (The committee wasn't happy, but allowed it in the end.) "He was a strange man," said the woman. I nodded. Adding himself to the committee was rather presumptuous, I acknowledged. But she had something else in mind. "He didn't believe in the Resurrection," she said. I raised my eyebrows. *Why not?* I asked. "He didn't really say."

This man was described as an efficient, no-nonsense businessman. I suspect that Resurrection is just too much of a miracle for such a person. For him and many others, Christ's bursting the bonds of death (as Luther's great Easter chorale puts it) simply bursts the bonds of rationality too far to be believed. And such doubters never think to pray Thomas's prayer, "I believe, Lord! Help my unbelief!"

I then reasoned out loud: if a person is willing to believe that even one "small" miracle can happen – say, Jesus turning water into wine – then no "big" miracle is impossible; no miracle of any kind is impossible. So why is the Resurrection such a sticking point?

It's a sticking point because being able to proclaim with one's heart as well as one's voice, "Christ is risen!" is first of all a matter of faith, not rationality. Later it occurred to me that it isn't a particular wonder that Mr. Rational Businessman is a former church member, and one who needs the prayers of the saints who do believe.

'Do not be amazed at this'

Mr. R.B. is not the only self-described Christian I've encountered or heard tell of who denies Christ's resurrection. But more common among professing Christians is an obliviousness to our own resurrection at Christ's return. From a "rational" point of view, our own resurrection defies belief further than Christ's resurrection: it can seem preposterous that we, no matter how long dead, nor the manner of our deaths, nor the disposition of our bodies, will one day hear his voice – and simply collect our dispersed molecules and *get up!* We will, as in Ezekiel's eerie vision of the dry bones, come back together bone on

'Behold, I tell you a mystery...'

bone, sinew on sinew, flesh on flesh, and in a new way, the breath of life!

"Don't be amazed at this," says Jesus (John 5:28). *Don't be amazed?* Well, yes. Why should we be, really? Nothing is impossible with God. (And the risen Christ is already sitting at God's right hand.)

The Apostles' Creed confesses it; the Nicene Creed says it: "I believe in the resurrection of the body." Yet, when I hear Christians talk about our glorious future with God in Christ, they seem to forget about their own resurrection. Or they assume it merely means that there is life – that is, spiritual life – after death. They talk only of heaven – that spiritual interlude between death and the Last Day and the new earth. And they talk as if that heavenly world of the spirit – where our spirits are united with Christ's Spirit in ways beyond our present union with Christ – is our final destination. It's not, wonderful though it surely will be.

Ignorance more than unbelief

Just a few weeks ago I came across this at ChristianityToday.com: in a poll, only 59 per cent of American evangelicals said they believe that they will one day rise from the dead. As it turns out, this alarming statistic likely comes not so much from denial of the Resurrection (the other 41 percent don't deny Christ's Resurrection) but from an accustomed focus on heaven rather than on the new earth and the consummation of all things. They simply don't see a connection between Christ's resurrection and their own. They apparently don't consider what will happen when the Kingdom finally comes (or at the Day of Judgment – see my column last month).

Given the (presumed) general orthodoxy of evangelical churches, it appears that many of them are negligent in their teaching specifically about the resurrection, the pollsters concluded. That's a pretty fundamental doctrine to be negligent about. I draw two further conclusions from that poll: few evangelicals hear or participate in the frequent reciting of either the Apostles' Creed nor the Nicene Creed, and so they do not weekly "confess with the church of all ages": "I believe in the resurrection of the body" (of course, one can also confess that weekly and not believe it). Secondly, evangelical teachings about the end times focus on millennial theology and the Rapture (being caught up to heaven with Christ), which leads to confusion. Thirdly, that, outside of church, a lot of Christians are no longer reading the Bible; or reading it much.

But what about us Reformed folks? Surely we don't have the same faults. I'm not so sure. I don't mean that we are intellectually unaware that we will rise on the Day of the LORD – believers to life and unbelievers to judgment – but that we act as if we are *practically* unaware of it.

'Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth'

As a child I remember being enthralled with the thought that after his resurrection Jesus, in his newly transformed body, could walk through walls and appear and disappear as he wished; and that he bodily ascended into heaven. (Twenty-third century *Star Trek* transporter technology is a cheap imitation.) What the glorified Jesus could do, we will be able to do some day, I reasoned. When somewhat older, I began to think of our transformed bodies in terms of the joy of being disease- and pain-free. I took note of the biblical hints given about our own resurrected bodies, and of the characteristics of our final home, the new earth.

While I was in college in the 1970s I remember hearing Pete Steen lecture excitedly about the new earth. Steen was a philosophy professor at Geneva College, Beavers Falls, Pennsylvania; he died of cancer in 1984 at age 48. Whether conversing or lecturing, Steen always talked excitedly; but his exhilaration about the new earth was especially palpable. He was keen to get us away from the notion that we are "at home" in our spirits but not our bodies, and that we will live out our eternal futures as spirits, not as re-embodied human beings on a transformed earth. I heard that talk more than 30 years ago, but I remember the gist of it vividly because Steen was so thrilled at the thought of it, and his emphasis was so uncommon. And because it so deeply tapped my existing anticipation of our bodily resurrection and new-earth home.

Since then, I've wondered off and on whether Reformed folks relish (any more than evangelicals do) thoughts about our glorious bodily life on the new earth, where God will live among us in a way far beyond the first Incarnation. I've discovered that I have at least one staunchly Reformed friend who admits that she is afraid of such thoughts. The subject seriously frightens her. As she described it, her fear is partly a profound dis-ease with such a great and unknown mystery; but it is coupled with a persistent suspicion that just maybe, maybe, she won't be one of those raised to *life*.

Only believe

What can I, her friend, say to such an unexpected revelation? "Just believe"? ("I know you believe, so why don't you know you believe?") That sounds simplistic and unhelpful. Yet Jesus himself, in a context of death and doubt, said those very words. "Don't be afraid, just believe" (Mark 5:36). Simple, but not simplistic. "Just believe."

The antidote to fear and doubt about your future is laid out in his Word. When you open and read, on every page you turn you'll find evidence that God keeps his promises. His word is good. He's good to his word. Read I Corinthians 15. Then to make it really get into your soul, put on a recording of Handel's *Messiah*. Go to the "Easter section" (Part III) and hear this guarantee reassuringly declared by a bass and brilliantly proclaimed by a trumpet:

Behold, I tell you mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.

The trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible! And we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality.

These words are Paul's, but this Word is Jesus's too, of course. In Baroque music, the words of Jesus are always given to a bass singer. In this mystery, hear the echo of our LORD: "Don't be afraid. Just believe."

He is risen. He is risen indeed. And we too shall rise! Alleluia!

Marian Van Til worked for Christian Courier from 1984-2000, and preceded Harry der Nederlanden as its editor. She now lives in Youngstown, NY; she may be contacted via e-mail at <mvantil@adelphia.net>.



Caring/Business

Twelve ways to support an Alzheimer's caregiver

Your caring can help prevent burnout

Lisa M. Petsche

One in ten Canadians over the age 65 and almost half of those over 85 have Alzheimer disease or a related dementia (gradual loss of intellectual functioning).

Alzheimer disease (AD), the most common form of dementia, involves gradual breakdown of nerve cells in the brain. Afflicted persons lose the ability to interpret information and to send messages to their body to behave in certain ways. Over time they experience mental, emotional, behavioural and physical changes, necessitating increasing amounts of supervision and, eventually, hands-on help with activities of daily living.

Family members, particularly wives and daughters, provide most – and in many cases all – of that care. They are at increased risk for depression and other health problems due to the emotional strain and the physical toll of caregiving.

Following are some things that you, as a friend or relative, can do to help prevent an Alzheimer caregiver you know from wearing down.

- 1. Keep in touch.** Recognize that you may have to make most of the effort in maintaining the relationship.
- 2. Become informed.** Educate yourself about Alzheimer disease – to help you understand the kinds of challenges caregivers can be faced with – and share information with family and friends. Share findings with the caregiver as well – especially strategies for managing chal-

lenging behavior.

- 3. Lend an ear.** Listen non-judgmentally and demonstrate compassion. Don't give unsolicited advice.
- 4. Connect her with other caregivers.** Locate caregiver support groups (contact your local chapter of the Alzheimer Society) and encourage her to try one. Offer to stay with her loved one while she attends meetings or, if concurrent care is provided, accompany her to the first meeting.
- 5. Promote self-care.** Encourage her to eat nutritiously, exercise and get sufficient rest in order to maintain good health. Do whatever you can to help make this happen. For example, bring over a meal, or offer to sit with her loved one while she goes for a walk or takes a nap to catch up on lost sleep. Also encourage her to get regular medical checkups. Offer to stay with her loved one while she attends appointments.
- 6. Provide practical help.** Determine what kind of assistance she could use most; perhaps it's picking up groceries, running errands, or doing laundry or yard work. If she initially declines assistance, continue to express your desire to help. Meanwhile, take it upon yourself to deliver a casserole or muffins or, if you're a neighbor, to mow her lawn or shovel her walk when you do your own.
- 7. Surprise her with a treat.** Ideas include a rented movie, a favorite magazine, fresh flowers or a plant, or a gift certificate to a restaurant that has delivery service. If you're on a limited income, sign out reading material, movies or CDs she would enjoy from the local library.
- 8. Give her a break.** Offer to sit with her loved one for an hour while she goes out to a hair appointment or to worship, or for a longer stretch so she can attend a cultural or social event.
- 9. Locate resources.** Offer to obtain information about community support services – such as accessible transportation, home care, adult day care and residential respite programs – if none are in place, and encourage their use as appropriate.
- 10. Join the local chapter of the Alzheimer Society.** Your support will assist them in providing aid not only to your friend or relative but also to others like her. Typical chapter programs and services include a telephone hotline, support groups, a Safe Return program for wanderers, training for family and professional caregivers, a newsletter and a resource library. Membership also makes a thoughtful gift for the caregiver, connecting her to a key resource.
- 11. Watch for signs of trouble.** Encourage her to seek help from her primary physician or a mental health worker if she feels overwhelmed or hopeless (possible signs of clinical depression), or if she starts to fear for her safety or that of her loved one.
- 12. Stand by her.** Praise her efforts and be an ongoing source of encouragement. In

particular, support her if she decides to pursue placement in a long-term care facility. Do whatever you can to help her and her loved one with the transition.



Lisa M. Petsche is a clinical social worker and freelance writer specializing in adult care issues.

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Classifieds

Wedding	Anniversaries	Obituaries	
<p>With thankfulness to God for bringing them together, Eric & Evelina Hartemink and John & Betty-Anne Werkema announce the upcoming marriage of their children</p> <p>Karen Elena Hartemink and Steven Matthew Werkema</p> <p>The Wedding will take place on Saturday May 13, 2006 at 11 a.m. in the Aylmer Christian Reformed Church.</p>	<p>Rev. PETER AND TENA MEYER (DeZoete) will celebrate 50 years of marriage on May 12, 2006.</p> <p>May the Lord bless you and keep you Mom & Dad.</p> <p>Love from Annette (Chelsea, Cedric, Doug), John, Norman, Ray, Yolanda & Rob (Erin, Bram).</p> <p>Open House on July 15, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. at Building #274 Tollendal Village, 272 Hurst Dr. Barrie, Ont. <i>Best wishes only please.</i></p> <p>Address: Unit G14, 282 Hurst Dr Barrie ON L4N 0Z3</p>	<p>The LORD took into his care suddenly in the twinkling of an eye our beloved son, brother and uncle</p> <p>WILFRED WENDELL KUIPERS</p> <p>Born January 20, 1956 in St. Catharines, Ontario Died as a result of a farm accident March 4, 2006 in Ingersoll, Oxford County, Ontario Beloved husband of Dianna Kuipers (nee VanEck) Precious father of Amber, Jordan, Logan, and Tyler Dear son of Ted & Alice Kuipers Older brother and mentor to: Terry & Tracy and family Hetty and family John Henry and family and Tessa and family.</p> <p>We hold on to the words of what the "Men of Praise" sang at Wilf's funeral "Go now in peace. Never be afraid, God will be with you each hour of every day."</p> <p>We pray this especially for his wife Dianna and his children who will miss him so very much!</p> <p>Correspondence: Ted & Alice Kuipers, 70 Tarry Parkway, Aylmer ON N5H 3H8</p>	
<p>Classifieds</p> <p>DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION Christian Courier is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 9 a.m. Tuesday, 13 days prior to publication date. RATE: (GST added to rates listed) All personal and family announcements: \$6.00 per square inch. rose@christiancourier.ca Display advertising, businesses and organizations: \$8.00 per square inch. email: ads@christiancourier.ca PHOTOS: There is a processing fee of \$25 for the inclusion of a photograph with a personal or family announcement. Photo space is not charged per square inch. We need either an original photo or a downloadable internet image. PERSONAL ADS: Christian Courier would be pleased to handle your personal ad in an efficient and discreet manner. The cost to set up a personal file under a unique file number is \$25. Ads requesting correspondence with this file are run at \$6 P.I. per insertion. SUBMITTING YOUR AD Mail: Christian Courier 1 Hiscott St St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7 fax: 905-682-8313 e-mail: ads@christiancourier.ca OTHER INFORMATION: CC reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format and editing style and is not responsible for any errors due to handwritten or phoned-in advertisements.</p>	<p>Hoogkerk, Gr. Grimsby, ON 1946 May 20 2006</p> <p>We joyfully announce the 60th Wedding Anniversary of FRED AND DOROTHY BOONSTRA</p> <p>We thank the LORD and praise him for this celebration. We pray that the LORD will continue to bless Dad and Mom. We ask him to keep them, and be gracious to them.</p> <p>With love from your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren:</p> <p>Harriet & Ross James, Australia Matthew Paul & Tamone - Blake, Brendan & Natalie - Caitlin Margaret & Joe DeVeer, Waterdown Bryan & Geri - Trevor, Justin, Julia Cynthia & Jeff - Chantelle, Melissa, Nicholas Wayne & Rachel - Owen Wilma & Ed Gringhuis, Dundas Scott & Kristi - Emma, Olivia Kim Amy & Shawn Gwen Kerry & Wilma Boonstra, Burlington Annette & Josh Karen & Joe Fred Jenny & Stan Jaskot, Ancaster Angela, Shauna, Mitchell Wally & Irene Boonstra, Waterdown John, Stephanie, Kristen Dorothy & Brian Trebych, Hamilton Gregory, Kevin</p> <p>Home address: 275 - 101 Main St E Grimsby ON L3M 5N8</p>	<p>JAN BOOT</p> <p>Born January 13, 1925 - Kerkwerve, Zeeland, The Netherlands Died April 7, 2006, St. Catharines, Ontario</p> <p>He leaves behind his beloved wife of 55 years, Truus Boot - de Jong</p> <p>Children: Ineke Soto Nelli & Fred VanderBerg Trudy & Frank Jonkman John Boot Pauline Boot</p> <p>Grandchildren and his precious great-grandchildren: Tim & Davi Boerefyn Jeff & Maria Boerefyn (John, Caleb, Marijka, Meagan) Stephen & Natalie Boerefyn (Melayah and Kai) Sarah & Irvin Stout (Isaiah and Janika) Julia Soto David & Kristen VanderBerg (Gabrielle) Jamie & Elaine VanderBerg (Justin, Drew, Katya) Natasja VanderBerg and Amy Packwood Robert & Eva VanderBerg Alisha Jonkman Jonathan Jonkman Michael Boot Adrian Boot</p> <p>The funeral was on Tuesday, April 11, 2006 at Covenant Christian Reformed Church, St. Catharines. Donations to the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee in lieu of flowers</p> <p>Correspondence: Truus Boot, 22 Simpson Rd St Catharines ON L2N 6P4</p>	
<p>Personals</p> <p>Christian widower mid 60, dutch descent who enjoys travelling and listening to music likes to meet a lady with similar interests. Reply to: File # 2754 c/o Christian Courier 1 Hiscott St., St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7</p>	<p>Vacation Rentals</p> <p>35 foot TRAILER at Lakewood Christian Campground. Close to Wyoming, Ont. Sleeps 7. Everything included. Available May - Oct. Call 905-732-6957</p>	<p>Fryske Boeken</p> <p>Ik begin oan it bynoar bringen fan ferskilende Fryske boeken en ferhalen. Soene jo wat kwyt wolle, ik helpe se graach op. As it te fier is, stjoer ze dan mar C.O.D. 'k Belooft dat der goed op past wurdt, en 'k hoop dat mei de tiid der in Fryske bibliotheek fan komt. Bedankt.</p> <p>Joast Reitsma, 98 Wellington St, Bowmanville, ON Canada L1C 1V7 (905) 623-6270 (905) 623-8887</p>	
<p>Woman in southern Ontario would like to correspond with a gentleman aged 55-60. Interested in sharing ideas and companionship. Reply to: File # 2753 c/o Christian Courier 1 Hiscott St., St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7</p>	<p>Fully furnished wooden cabin in Lippenhuizen, Friesland. In the beautiful wooded area near Beetsterzwaag. Bikes included. Sleeps four persons. 275 euro per week. Available starting September 2006. Contact at: sj.kalma@planet.nl</p>		
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		<p>Come Celebrate with us! MR. GARRY GLASBERGEN, Principal, and MRS. FEMMY WALPOT, V.P. and Grade 1 teacher are retiring after this school year. Both have taught for 39 yrs and have touched so many lives and for this we give thanks. The Jarvis District Christian School Society would like to show their appreciation on: Date: Friday, June 2, 2006 from 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. (Open house and short program) Where: Jarvis District Christian School Gymnasium</p>	
		<p>COME CELEBRATE! the 33 year career of MR. WILLIAM (BILL) THIES, Wellandport Christian School Administrator. OPEN HOUSE RETIREMENT PARTY to be held at Wellandport Christian School on Sat., May 27, 2006 from 1 - 4 p.m. 84008 Wellandport Road, Wellandport, ON. If you would like to attend or be involved in the program please contact Lorraine at wcs@wellandportchristianschool.ca or call 905-386-6272.</p>	

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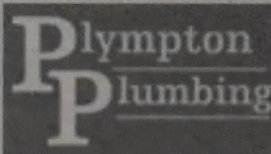
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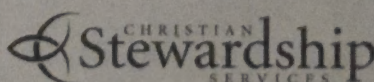
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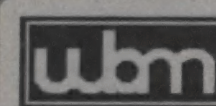
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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is \$7.50 per line, or \$1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion

Apr 29 The Southwestern Interdenominational Christian Men's Choir Association annual Festival of Praise concert at 7:30 p.m. Forest City Community Church, 3725 Bostwick Road, in London. Over 200 voices will be singing in the combined choirs of Woodstock, Chatham, Clinton, St Thomas, and Samia. Special guest soloist will be Jane Valenti. Tickets are \$13.00 each and are available from any of the choir members, Merrifield Book Shop, the Christian Armory store in Woodstock, or by calling (519)456-5075

May 6, 7 Grace CRC, Coburg, 50th anniversary. All invited to join in celebrations. Biletting available. Call 905-372-3642 or email: grace.church@bellnet.ca. Website: www.cobourggrace.org

May 6 Combined 85 voices by the "Crescendo" Male Choir, St. Thomas and The Ottawa Carleton Male Choir present a "Concert of Sacred Song and Music". Special guest soloist Renee Stalenhoef, soprano. Saturday evening at 7:30 p.m. St. Paul's Congregational Church, 450 Park Ave. Chatham. Tickets \$10.00. Advance: 351-7151 or at the door. Information (519) 637-4357.

May 7 Combined 85 voices by the "Crescendo" Male Choir, St. Thomas and The Ottawa Carleton Male Choir present a "Concert of Sacred Song and Music". Special guest soloist Renee Stalenhoef, soprano. Sunday evening at 7:30 p.m. Knox Presbyterian Church, 55 Hincks Street, St. Thomas. Freewill offering for the Canadian Bible Society. Information: (519) 637-4357.

May 12,13 Jarvis District Christian School, 50th anniversary. On Friday evening - dinner and an evening program. Tickets available from February 15 to March 31, 2006. Seating is limited. Payment of \$50.00 per ticket must accompany order. Various activities are planned for Saturday concluding with a service of Thanksgiving at the neighbouring CRC at 7:00 p.m. For more information visit www.jdcs.ca and to purchase tickets contact Marcia Cota (519)587-3111.

May 21 Dutch Service will be held in the Ancaster Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Ralph Koops will be preaching.

June 3 Calvin Christian School, Drayton, ON, is Celebrating 50 years of Christian Education! Celebrate with us! Open House at the school noon until 5 p.m. Evening program at 7:30 p.m. at the Drayton CRC. For details phone 519 638 2935 or go to website: www.calvchri.org

Oct 27-29 Hamilton District Christian High School 50th anniversary weekend. For information about activities or to register as alumni: www.hdch.org or 905.648.6655

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May 17-19, 2006

Levis Faculty Center, University of Illinois
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CONFERENCE REGISTRATION, SCHEDULE AND INFORMATION:

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From One Generation to Another Ps. 145:2-4

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June 3, 2006

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Evening program at 7:30 p.m. at the Drayton CRC.

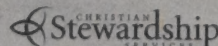
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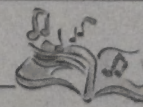
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News

A hard new world for Afrikaaners

Stephanie Hanes

PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA — A few miles west of Pretoria's downtown, away from the buildings that house the nerve centers of South Africa's bureaucracy, is the old neighborhood of Danville.

This was once home to civil servants and factory workers, miners and truck drivers — all Afrikaaners, descendants of long-ago Dutch settlers. They had brick houses and fenced-in yards, pensions and job security. They had promises from South Africa's leaders that no white brother would be abandoned to poverty — a main tenet of the apartheid system.

Irene and Jannie Dupper rented a house in Danville. It had three bedrooms and a yard for Jannie's gardening.

"Ach, it was a nice house," sighs Mrs. Dupper, a slight smile creeping in with the memory.

But to find the Duppers these days, you must go to the end of Danville, and down a short driveway. There, you see an old army building, surrounded by a collection of tents, trailers, and "Wendy Huts," room-size wooden boxes that look like Home Depot tool sheds. This is Kwaggaspoort Reddingsdaad, a white squatter camp.

Twelve years after the end of apartheid, whites on the lowest rung of South Africa's socioeconomic ladder are experiencing role reversal. Apartheid's safety net for Afrikaners is gone, and now blacks are the preferred candidates for civil service positions and private-sector jobs. Whites are even living in squatter camps — the type of settlements long home to millions of impoverished blacks across the country.

Whites — Afrikaaners and those of British descent — as a whole are still far wealthier than the 80 percent black majority here. Median income for whites is \$11,000, compared with \$2,000 for blacks. But what's changing is that whites and blacks seem to have reversed roles at the lowest income levels. The number of whites earning less than \$80 a month grew by more than 50 percent between 2000 and 2004 — while the number of blacks in that bracket decreased by half, according to a recent Standard Bank study.

There are many white squatter camps around Pretoria. But most are hidden — either because Afrikaaners are too proud to let their poverty show, or because squatting is illegal, social workers say.

"I don't think many people realize there is this squatting," says Andre Vermaak, who runs charity projects for the majority white Solidarity trade union. "I think we're too proud for our own good, maybe."

So these settlements are hidden behind houses, with up to 100 people living on one small lot, taking turns in one small bath-

room. Or, like Kwaggaspoort Reddingsdaad, they're clustered around institutional buildings.

Irene Laasen and Jannie Dupper met at a post office in Pretoria in 1978. She was an 18-year-old secretary, daughter of the postmaster. Jannie was 22, a truck driver with the postal service. His father was a traffic cop, his mother a homemaker who "never worked a day of her life," he recalls proudly.

They married, she stopped work, he started a well-paying job at a mechanics shop owned by Irene's brother. They had three children. For a decade they were the solid Afrikaaner family: children of civil servants, parents of the next white generation. If they stumbled, they knew, the state would pick them up.

Maybe, in the back of their minds, they were aware of the unrest that would soon unravel their cocoon. The black townships were increasingly violent with protests. Steve Biko was preaching his concept of black consciousness. International outrage at South Africa was growing.

But the Duppers were children of apartheid. They didn't question why blacks lived in squalid townships, nor doubt the government characterization of black protesters as terrorists.

"It's how it was," Jannie shrugs, resigned.

In 1990, Nelson Mandela left prison, and in 1994 his African National Congress took control of the country. But it was in 1999 that the Duppers felt the first real stab of change: Irene's brother died in a car accident, and the family mechanic's business collapsed. Jannie tried to find new work, but private employers wanted black employees in order to comply with racial-equity laws.

Ever-available civil service jobs for Afrikaners were gone.

Asked how many jobs he applied for, Jannie laughs bitterly: "Many." More than 10? "Ja." More than 20? "Ja."

He turns and walks into his hut.

When they ran out of money, Irene's surviving brothers invited the Duppers to stay with them. But, says Irene, "I won't do that. It's not right."

Instead she called Lenie Pretorius, a private social worker she'd helped with charity projects. Ms. Pretorius told Irene about Kwaggaspoort Reddingsdaad, a camp she was running for impoverished whites.

Down the camp's red dust road is a dark wooden hut with a makeshift garden of potted aloe plants and ferns. It has two rooms — one barely fits a double bed, the other holds a single bed and a counter with a hot plate. The communal showers are down the road. This has been home to the Duppers since 2000.

In the morning, showers are reserved for the residents who have work — a piece job here, a temp position there. The others can bathe later. Breakfast is at 8 a.m. A handful of camp residents cook for the 60-some adults and 15 children who live here.

Lunch is at 1 p.m. At 4 p.m. families collect food parcels for their evening meal, to cook for themselves in their huts.

Irene works in the center's sewing program. Once or twice a week, she also takes a bus to the Pretoria courthouse, where she works as a night cleaning woman, returning to her shack at 4 a.m. She makes \$14 a night.

"We believe that if you don't work, you don't eat," said Elize Jacobs, a camp manager. "We want this to be a through-fare only, a place to get you back on your feet."

The Duppers' middle son, 23 and also named Jannie, is confident that this life is, in fact, temporary. But the high school graduate, a welder, hasn't found work for two years. Companies tell him they don't have positions. "Everything is

falling apart now," he says. "With this new government, they are looking out for the black people, instead of looking out for the white people."

The reality has left his parents perhaps less optimistic about their own way out of the camp. "It's been so long, you just get used to the way we live," says Irene.

"If we were black, it would be easier." The irony is as thick as her Afrikaans accent.

Stephanie Hanes is a correspondent for *The Christian Science Monitor*.



Kwaggaspoort white squatter camp



Mrs. Dupper in her one-room shack